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OR,
THE MYSTERY OF THE PAVILION.

BY K. F. HILL,
AUTHOR OF "THE DUMB DETECTIVE," "THE
TWIN DETECTIVES," "THE MYSTERI-
OUS CASE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

"THIS LOOKS LIKE MURDER."

A RAINBOW play of colors fell through the stained-glass windows upon the marble walls and floor of a magnificent bath-room. The bath was arranged after the style in vogue in ancient Roman palaces. The water ran in a miniature cascade, falling over crystalline rocks; it was both warm and perfumed. The basin which received the tempting flood was carved from a solid mass of marble sunk in the floor and sloped gently in a sort of shell shape; it was six feet long and over three feet in width and depth. The rainbow hues did not rest upon marble alone—they fell caressingly on a form which lay extended upon the floor, with one hand resting in the warm, perfumed water.

A man's form—a man cold in death.

IT WAS UNLOCKED AND SARAH THREW IT WIDE OPEN, FLASHING THE BULL'S-EYE'S RAYS FULL INTO THE ROOM OF THE TRAGEDY.

He was young, some thirty years. His hair, bright golden, lay in close curls; his features were perfectly formed; his skin white and polished as that of a beautiful woman.

His form was massive, and he was clothed in a long robe of purple silk, which clung around him where he lay in the calm sleep of death.

The hand that lay in the water was soft, white as ivory and beautifully formed. Upon the third finger there shone with a steady white gleam an immense moonstone.

The trickle of the waterfall sounded pleasant; the air in the bath-room was warm and grateful to the senses; but the horrible repose of the form upon the floor was mysterious.

No blood stained the snowy purity of the luxurious apartment. No cry of murder had disturbed the quiet of the inmates of the most magnificent mansion in the aristocratic neighborhood. How, then, had this man met his death?

All through the mansion the busy servants moved about, attending to their duties, and in Randolph Church's elegant dressing-rooms his valet was placing the costly garments his master intended to wear in order.

That master would never again wear aught but grave-clothes.

In the grand reception-room a woman was superintending the dusting and arranging of the countless costly trifles that littered brackets, cabinets, and *etageres*; the morning sunshine fell through stained windows by Lafarge, making the embroidered wall-hangings of rich tapestry glow in richer tints; the glitter of gold, and mirrors, magnificent carpets, and rare furniture, beautiful paintings and objects of art, made up a picture of wealth and splendor.

The woman who led the band of well-trained, deft maids about the room was a strange-looking creature.

Tall and straight as a dart, with a complexion like burnished copper, a lithe, slender form, raven hair and flashing eyes, she seemed an unsuitable inmate for the grand Fifth-avenue palace.

Her dress, too, was peculiar. A long robe of deep crimson hung in straight folds from her shoulders to her feet; her long black hair was braided and coiled about her small head, and the loose, flowing sleeves of her gown fell nearly to her knees.

She was not young; her age was between fifty and sixty; but her movements were agile as those of a girl of sixteen, her footsteps light, her walk graceful.

Her voice was soft and low, and she spoke with the languid drawl of a Creole.

This woman was Oello—a Peruvian Indian. She was the nurse of Miss Church, who was a native of that far-off republic.

The time was early morning; the season, mid-winter.

No breath of cold air could reach the inmates of the Church mansion. The air was oppressively warm. Even in the immense hall huge logs blazed in the wide fire-place, in old-fashioned Christmas fashion, sending ruddy gleams across the tiled floors, wide oaken stair-cases, wainscoted walls and ancient armor that stood here and there, for the Churches were a family of old English descent, and loved to prove the fact.

Randolph Church was the last male representative of his race. His father had long been an inmate of the vault whose massive bronze door, would soon open to admit his son. His uncle the father of Miss Church, had died in Peru, where he had been sent on a mission of diplomacy by the President. While in the land of golden fable he had taken to himself a young and beautiful wife. She had died, after a year of wedlock, leaving an infant daughter, and the child had been left fatherless also in the twelfth year of her age. Randolph Church's mother was living; she was the mistress of the house, and a queen she thought herself.

Her niece, Ubaldina Church, was of mixed blood. Her mother, the young wife of the ambassador, had been a belle in Peruvian society; but, notwithstanding that fact, she had Indian blood in her veins. Her father was a Spanish noble, and very wealthy, and her mother a beautiful Peruvian lady of high standing, but mixed descent.

Ubaldina had been brought up in Peru, and had been only one year a resident of New York. She was just seventeen years of age and an heiress. Her nurse, the Indian woman, had been born a slave and had never accepted her freedom.

Oello was devoted to her young mistress, and she would have died rather than permit the slightest injury to Uba—as the girl was called. The strange, silent woman had obtained considerable influence in the household, and was invaluable to Mrs. Church, who was extremely exacting and difficult to please.

No one had ever suited her like the quiet, almost noiseless Indian woman, who moved about her duties with her soft, graceful gait.

"I wish I had no one in my house but Peruvians," said the lady to her son one day.

"I differ with you. I neither like nor trust Oello," was his reply.

Oello had a son in New York—a dark, slender young man, who called to see his mother occa-

sionally. He was well dressed, and seemed in easy circumstances. Oello said he was a salesman, which was not the truth, for the young Peruvian was neither better nor worse than a professional gambler and "crook." He had discarded his Indian name and called himself Ernest Stanard. He could speak several languages, and passed for an Englishman.

He was very dark, but accounted for that fact by saying that his mother was Spanish.

Ernest Stanard was a handsome fellow, but his eyes were set very close together, and his gaze did not meet that of any person he conversed with as that of a frank, honest man does.

Mrs. Church was a late riser. She was still in her bedchamber, wrapped in a satin dressing-gown, thickly quilted and wadded with swan's-down.

She was a beautiful old lady, with clearly-cut, aristocratic features, and snow-white hair, but her eyes were cold and stern and her mouth haughty. Distressed people never appealed to her for sympathy, and no children loved her.

"Mabel," she said to a tired-faced woman of some thirty-five years, who stood beside the haughty lady as she sipped her chocolate.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Go to Miss Church's room and tell her I wish to see her."

"Yes, ma'am."

The tired-faced woman softly left the room. Mrs. Church looked after her impatiently.

"I have always had a perfect horror of poor relations," she said, angrily, "and here I am saddled with one for the rest of my life."

In about ten minutes the *portiere* of deep-blue plush was pushed aside, and a young girl entered.

"Aunt, Mabel says you wish to see me."

"So I do, my dear. Anette, a cup of chocolate for Miss Church."

"No, thank you; Oello brought me my coffee."

"Well, sit down, dear. Anette, you may go."

Miss Church took a seat near the fire in its bright brass grate, for like all natives of warm climates she felt the cold intensely. She was a strange-looking girl, far from attractive—in fact, was almost repellent.

She was exceedingly slender and small: her face and figure were elf-like, and dark circles surrounded her immense eyes, making them look still larger than they were.

Her small face was pale, except the lips, which glowed with a vivid crimson. Her pointed chin and narrow forehead were not eloquent of intellect, and her expression was cunning and cat-like.

She was richly dressed, though the hour was early, and her little dark hands, which resembled claws, were covered with costly rings.

"Ubaldina, my dear, you are now seventeen."

"Yes. Why do you allude to my age?"

The girl laughed; there was nothing joyous or girlish about the laugh, however.

"Because, my dear, I wish to see some settlement of your affairs. As you know, my doctor fears my affection of the heart may terminate fatally at any moment."

"I hope he is mistaken in his opinion," said Ubaldina, but her eyes glowed.

If any member of Mrs. Church's family grieved for her, should she be suddenly carried off by her disease of the heart, it would not be this niece!

"I fear not. However, I did not call you here to discuss my ailments. You have confessed to me that you love Randolph."

The girl's eyes were fixed on the glowing coals, but Mrs. Church saw the tigerish gleam that flashed from their depths. Her small, thin hands, too, clinched together in her lap, and her thin lips were tightly shut.

"He is worthy of your love," resumed his mother, with an astonished look on her patrician face.

"I know it, but he may not reciprocate."

"I am sure he does," interrupted Mrs. Church, hastily.

"If not, I must bear the blow," said Miss Church, but her face wore an evil look that startled the old lady more than ever.

"Nonsense, dear. It is such a suitable match."

"Some people disapprove of cousins marrying."

"Well, I do not. It is all folly."

"Have you spoken to Randolph on the subject, aunt?"

"No, dear, but I will, and there is no time like the present. Will you ring for Mabel?"

Miss Church pulled the silken bell-cord, and in a moment the poor relation appeared.

"Mabel, tell Borrowdale to ask Mr. Church to come here."

Ubaldina's face never changed, though it might be supposed that she would feel embarrassed by Mr. Church's presence under the circumstances.

Mabel returned, looking rather startled.

"What is the matter?"

Mrs. Church's tone of alarm warned Mabel to be silent on the subject of her own surprise and uneasiness.

"Nothing, madam; Mr. Church is in the bath-room."

She made a rapid sign to Ubaldina, who rose promptly, saying:

"Excuse me, aunt; I would prefer not being present while you talk with Randolph. It would embarrass me."

"Very well, dear," graciously to her niece. "Shut that door, Mabel!" sharply to the poor relation.

"Now, what is the matter, Mabel?"

"Oh, Miss Church, Borrowdale says he has knocked at the bath-room door a dozen times."

"Why has he done so?"

The two women were walking in the direction of Miss Church's rooms.

"Because his master has been in there since half-past five o'clock."

"Half-past five! I knew Mr. Church was an early riser, but I never knew he carried his habit to such extremes."

"Well, it is so. Borrowdale is anxious."

"I do not wonder. What time is it now—half-past nine?"

She glanced at the costly French time-piece on her mantle.

"Yes, it is fully half-past nine." Ubaldina reflected for a moment. "What had we better do, Mabel?"

"Mrs. Church—" Mabel began.

"On no account!" said Miss Church, hastily.

"Don't you know Doctor Muir says we must never excite her?"

"Well, what are we to do?"

"Call Borrowdale."

Miss Church sat down before the fire, her pointed chin resting in the palm of her hand, her elbow on her knee. She looked expectant, but neither alarmed nor anxious.

A soft footstep sounded on the thick carpet. Miss Church looked up.

A fat, middle-aged man stood before her. His dress was a full suit of black broadcloth; he wore a plain white tie, and his face was clean shaved. A well-trained English valet.

"I am at your service, Miss Church."

"Oh, Borrowdale, what's this I hear about your master being in his bath since five o'clock?"

"Half-past five, miss," corrected the valet, drawing a handsome gold watch from his pocket.

"Well, it is now half-past nine—four hours. Have you knocked on the door?"

"Yes, miss, repeatedly."

"Then you must force the door. Mr. Church may have fainted in his bath, or he may be ill."

"I trust not, miss," said Borrowdale, his naturally pale face turning still whiter.

"Something must be amiss. Lose no time."

Borrowdale hastened from the room. As he passed through the hall he rung the bell, and summoned the butler and one of the footmen.

The bath-room was apart from the body of the house, being one of Mr. Church's suit of apartments, which had been built at the back of the mansion in the form of a pavilion. A marble passage led from the main hall to this pavilion, which was a beautiful building designed by Randolph himself.

It was one story high, with the roof domed, and all the rooms were lit from this dome, the windows being of stained glass.

A sitting-room, two bedrooms, a luxurious bath-room, and two large closets, and an immense dressing-room comprised the suit which filled the pavilion.

Borrowdale, followed by the other men, passed swiftly through the passage and bedroom, and knocked loudly at the door of the bath-room.

No answer came back save the gurgle of the miniature cascade.

"I'll force the door," said the valet, and assisted by the butler he did so.

The three men stood aghast. Their master lay before them—a corpse. One of the footmen raised the cold hand that rested in the water; but Borrowdale waved him away from the body.

"Touch nothing!" he said, in an authoritative manner. "Touch nothing; send for the police and the coroner. This is a case of murder—no, of suicide!"

CHAPTER II.

MURDER, SUICIDE, OR WHAT?

THE police came, and the coroner looked important, spoke in impressive whispers, asked innumerable questions, and discovered—nothing!

Randolph Church was dead. He had been dead for hours. No noise had been heard in the pavilion. To be sure, Borrowdale had not been there all the time, and the walls of the bath-room were very thick; its window was high up in the dome, and the pavilion had no other tenants save the valet and his master.

The coroner deemed an autopsy necessary to determine the cause of death.

"How long has Mr. Church been dead?" asked a quiet voice.

The doctor turned around with a glare of professional indignation.

A slim man had asked the question. He was plainly dressed, but looked self-possessed.

"I cannot tell without a fuller examination of the body. Even then it is always doubtful. In some cases the *rigor mortis* sets in half an hour—in others it is delayed from one to four hours, and it may not occur for twenty hours. It has been known to delay for thirty hours. Its duration is generally from twenty-four to thirty-six hours and—"

"Mr. Church has been dead half an hour, for he is cold," said the quiet little man, raising the stiff hand of the corpse.

"Really, this—*person* is rather officious," said the coroner.

"I only wish to make a few inquiries," said the man, who looked keen and also brave. His face was an intelligent—indeed a sharp one; his eyes gray and very clear.

"I'm at a loss to know why."

"I'm a detective, sir."

"Who sent for you?"

"I cannot tell, sir."

"I did."

Borrowdale was the speaker. He seemed bewildered and unlike himself, but he spoke calmly.

"Indeed, and how did *you* happen to think it necessary to employ a detective?"

"Because I think my master has been murdered!"

A sneer curled the coroner's lip. He was a

as little publicity as possible. She at once declared her son had *not* been murdered.

That was impossible—out of the question. Wherever there was a murder there must also be a motive.

Her son's death was due to heart-disease. She was certain of it, before the *coroner* returned the same opinion—*through* the jury.

Randolf Church was buried, having "died of heart-disease."

The funeral was over; the pavilion was closed. Mrs. Church was calm and dignified as before, but Anette and Mabel knew how much she suffered.

She never gave up. Her snow-white hair was as carefully arranged as ever; her dresses somber and heavy with crape, the insignia of woe, were as elegant and costly, but her proud heart was rent.

Not long would the bronze gates remain closed. Greenwood, "the beautiful city of the dead," would soon find room for another inmate.

Mrs. Church was doomed.

Every one was satisfied with the verdict of the coroner's jury—except one person. That was Borrowdale—Randolf Church's valet.

The day after the inquest he took a walk and a ride. He rode on a Second avenue horse-car, for he mortally hated the elevated tracks.

"When you burst it open?"

"Yes."

"This looks like an old hand. Had your master any enemies?"

"None to my knowledge."

"But without your knowledge, he may have?"

"Yes, he was very reserved."

"Hum! How did the man kill him?"

"Strangled him!"

The detective started, fixed his eyes on the valet, and asked, eagerly:

"Was there any mark visible?"

"Yes."

"Did any other person see it besides you?"

"Two people saw it."

"Who were they?"

"The butler and the undertaker."

"What did they say?"

"The undertaker said the mark was caused by the support for the neck in the ice-box."

"And the butler?"

"Thought as I did."

"That it was the mark of fingers?"

"No, sir."

"What then?"

"A cord—or chain."

"A cord or chain? How could a strong, able man be murdered without giving an alarm?"

"His cries would not be heard outside the pavilion."

"No. The bath-room was in the center—as near as I could judge, for I had not time to examine anything."

"You are right. The pavilion was, and is, an octagon, and the bath-room is in the center."

"How is it approached?"

"Through my master's bedroom."

"And your master's bedroom?"

"By the passage which runs all the way around the pavilion and up to the house."

"How is the pavilion heated?"

"From the house, by steam-pipes laid underground."

"Hum! Then the murderer came from the house in broad daylight?"

For the first time Borrowdale hesitated, and Knowles noticed that he seemed embarrassed.

"I believe a detective is like a doctor, or confessor," he said, slowly.

"Yes, exactly."

"Then I must tell you the truth. I believe my master was murdered during the night."

"But you did not miss him till morning."

"I was not in the house after ten o'clock the night before."

"Ha! Now I begin to see daylight. Where were you?"

"I went to Brooklyn, with my master's permission."

"Or without it, eh?"

"No; he gave me permission to go; but not to stay all night."

"What time did you return?"

"At half-past five, and missing Mr. Randolph, I thought he was in the bath-room."

"Wasn't that an unusual hour for him to bathe?"

"No, he was forever bathing. If he couldn't sleep, he'd bathe in the middle of the night."

"A strange fancy; but was he accustomed to rising early?"

"Yes."

"Did he ever go out at night?"

"Frequently. I think that was one reason he built the pavilion, for no one missed him when he remained away all night."

"How long have you lived with him?"

"Seven years. I came from Europe with him."

"Had he always been in the habit of keeping irregular hours?"

"No."

"How long is it since he began to stop out all night?"

"Four years this winter."

"Hum! Now I want you to tell me whom you suspect of committing the crime?"

"No one."

"Honest?"

"No; my master was kind, good and generous. Every one loved him."

The detective indulged in a little silent reflection.

"I'll have to become an inmate of your house for awhile," he said, at length.

"Just what I was going to suggest."

"But no one must suspect who I am, or I might as well remain here."

"How will you manage? They all saw you."

Knowles smiled.

"That question is pensive and child-like," he said.

"Well, I leave the whole matter in your hands. I suppose I shall soon be leaving the house, though I've received no warning. Your fee will be my affair. I've saved up a few pounds."

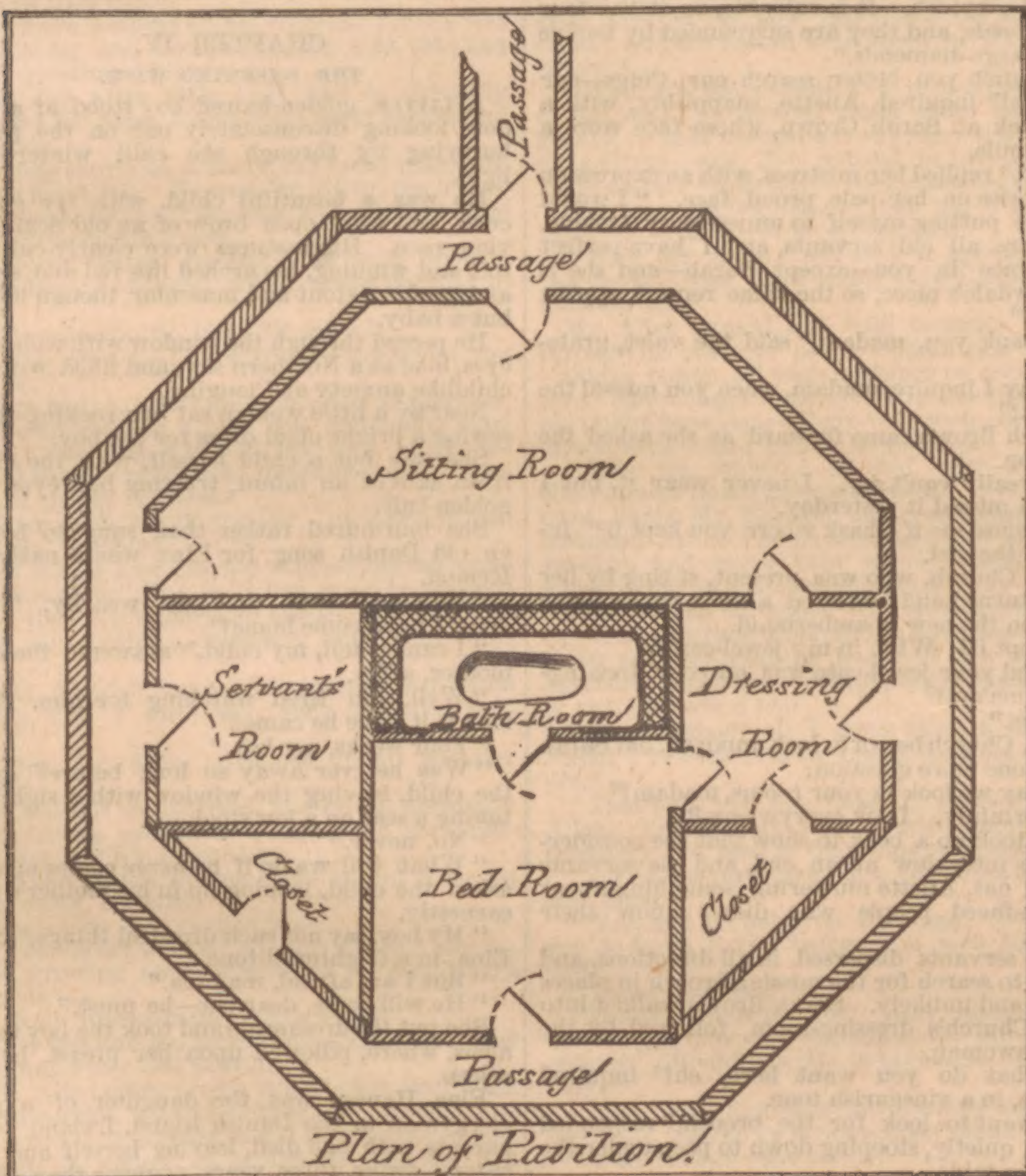
"Which you are willing to devote to learning your master's fate?"

Borrowdale did not answer immediately; but the detective knew why. The faithful servant had to choke back a sob first.

"I've got a wife in Brooklyn, sir, and Mr. Church set her up in a little cigar store, so I won't starve till I get another place."

"Is the housekeeper a good friend of yours?"

"Middling, sir; why?"



medical man, and here was one whom in his heart he termed a "flunky" taking it upon himself to pass opinions.

"Oh, you do? Who is in authority here now?"

He addressed his question to the butler. That functionary rubbed his chin in perplexity.

"Well, sir, there's Mrs. Church, Mr. Randolph's mother, and there is Miss Church—"

"Are they aware?"

"No, sir."

"Then let them be informed at once."

"Not Mrs. Church," protested Borrowdale.

"Mrs. Church must not be told till her doctor is here."

"Why not?"

The coroner was disposed to "sit on" the valet without waiting for *his* death, for he deemed the man officious.

"Because she has heart-disease, and the news may kill her."

"Heart-disease? Who is her physician now?"

"Doctor Muir."

"Let him be sent for at once."

He came, and the terrible news was gently broken to Mrs. Church. It did not kill her. It did not even seem to move her very deeply.

She was a proud woman, with an immense power over her feelings; she never betrayed herself in the presence of others.

She gave her orders very quietly and clearly. Let everything be done in proper order—with

He arrived at his destination—a very neat house in Yorkville. It was situated on Seventy-seventh street, and was the home of the quiet man who had been present the day Randolph Church's body was discovered.

Borrowdale rung the bell and inquired of a very pretty round-faced girl whether Mr. Knowles could be seen.

"Walk in and I'll ask."

Borrowdale walked in and sat down in a very bright, home-like parlor, with pretty furniture, a gay carpet, nice pictures, and a good fire.

He had not long to wait, for the detective came briskly in and started when he saw his visitor, and then asked:

"Well, anything new found out?"

"Nothing."

"All right. You still stick to your opinion?"

"I know that my master was murdered, and I've come to ask you to help me find out who committed the crime."

"All right. Sit down and let us talk."

"Ask any questions you wish."

"Very well. I was so promptly cleared out the other day that I hadn't time to ask one."

"How did the murderer commit the crime?"

Borrowdale looked around uneasily.

"All right. My wife is a helpless cripple, and my only servant would as soon think of flying as listening at a door."

"The door must have been tampered with."

"How was it fastened?"

"It was locked and bolted."

"I want her to engage your niece as one of her help."

"But I have no niece out here, and—"

"Hold on."

The detective vanished, leaving Borrowdale rather mystified.

"Uncle, can't you get me a place?" inquired a woman's voice, and the astonished valet turned and found a young lady at his elbow.

The detective had been gone about twelve minutes.

The young woman had fair hair, a plump form, and rosy cheeks.

"Astonished, eh?"

The brisk voice of the detective came from the young woman's very red lips.

She seated herself. She was neatly dressed, in a plaid dress, plain linen cuffs, collar and apron, and wore small gold earrings.

"I am very 'andy, ma'am, and I haven't been hover very long. I'm very hobbling and hantious to please."

Borrowdale could not repress a smile.

"I like New York hever so much, ma'am. My name is Sarah Brown, and I'll soon learn your ways and be hup to heverythink."

CHAPTER III.

SARAH BROWN ENTERS UPON HER DUTIES.

The housekeeper at the Church mansion was a fat, motherly woman, Mrs. Flutter by name.

She was very good-natured, and, as one chambermaid more or less made little difference in such a large household, she graciously assented to Borrowdale's request that his niece, Sarah Brown, might be engaged.

Sarah came; she was a fresh-colored girl of buxom form and ready smile. She seemed exceedingly willing to work and anxious to please, and, though the French maid, Anette, tossed her head over her misplaced b's, the English girl was soon a prime favorite.

Sarah liked every one, and almost every one liked Sarah. The exceptions were Anette and Oello.

The slender, dark woman regarded the new chambermaid with unfriendly eyes.

"We don't need her, madam," she said to Mrs. Church, for she hoped to persuade that lady to discharge the new-comer.

"Never mind, Oello. Let her stay; we don't need Borrowdale, either, for that matter; but Mr. Church had a high opinion of him, and I will not discharge him at present. It is the depth of winter, and he might not find another place. The girl is a stranger in the city and Flutter likes her. Let her stay."

So Sarah remained, and, as Anette said, flirted openly with the footman and butler.

Mrs. Church, though cold, was very just, and no one could accuse her of meanness.

She was exacting and hard to please, but she did not care how much help the housekeeper employed so long as the work went on smoothly and well.

Since her son's death she had not been so fault-finding; for one reason the house was very dull and quiet. The visits of condolence had all been paid, and Mrs. and Miss Church were left to nourish their grief in seclusion by their fashionable friends.

The demands of society had to be regarded and fashion's rules obeyed.

Sarah Brown studied the household at her leisure.

She summed them up:

"Mrs. Church—proud as Satan. Nothing to gain by her son's death.

(A detective holds no tie sacred. He suspects everybody.)

"Miss Church—don't understand her. Servants say she loved Randolph Church. Will bear watching!

"Oello—Peruvian squaw—Chunchos. Sly—deep—bear close watching.

"French maid—vain, shallow—fond of money and dress.

"Butler—fussy, harmless old man.

"Housekeeper—good-natured and death on propriety.

"Two footmen—brainless cockneys.

"Other servants—all right."

Sarah Brown's suspicions pointed toward Miss Church and her nurse, if they could be said to point to any one in the house. Borrowdale had not been placed in the list at all, simply because the detective knew the valet had no hand in the murder of his master.

"Borrowdale," said Sarah, as she sat in the valet's room in the upper part of the house—for he no longer slept in the pavilion—"I must examine the bath-room door.

The valet looked puzzled.

"I don't see how you can. The only way to enter the pavilion is through the passage, and Mrs. Church has the key."

"Can't you ask for it—or steal it?"

Borrowdale slowly shook his head.

"Then I must pick the lock."

"Can't do it."

"Why not?"

"Because it is a very uncommon one. The key is a curious affair—don't look like a door-key. More like a safe key."

"What sort of a key has the bath-room?"

"An ordinary one."

"Well, I must get into that pavilion."

Borrowdale offered no suggestions. Like most men of his business, he was accustomed to depending on others for directions, not to originating ideas for himself.

"You must tell me where Mrs. Church keeps the key, and I'll steal it."

"She keeps it in her dressing-case."

"Do you mean a piece of furniture, or a box of face-powder, when you say 'dressing-case'?"

"I mean what we call a dressing-case in England—a case for brushes, tooth-powder, and all that."

"Well, I must get hold of that key. Now for a plan to do it."

The detective bid Borrowdale good-night, for their interviews always took place after the household had retired.

Next day the servants were all called into the reception-room by Mrs. Flutter, who was in a state popularly described by her own name.

"Mrs. Church has lost a valuable pin," she said, nervously smoothing down her apron, which was necessarily ample, "and I want you all to hear just how it looks, so you can find it."

They filed in, some with frightened faces, others looking cool and unconcerned—Sarah Brown being among the latter.

"I've lost or mislaid a pin," said Mrs. Church, languidly, as she lay back in her easy-chair. "It is a large, old-fashioned pin, what they used to call a brooch. It is valuable, as it has four large opals, and they are surrounded by twelve quite large diamonds."

"Haden't you better search our t'ings—our troonks?" inquired Anette, snappishly, with a sour look at Sarah Brown, whose face wore a calm smile.

"No," replied her mistress, with an expression of surprise on her pale, proud face. "I would only be putting myself to unnecessary trouble. You are all old servants, and I have perfect confidence in you—except Sarah—and she is Borrowdale's niece, so the same remark applies to her."

"Thank you, madam," said the valet, gratefully.

"May I inquire, madam, when you missed the brooch?"

Sarah Brown came forward as she asked the question.

"I really can't say. I never wear it, but I think I missed it yesterday."

"Excuse me if I ask where you kept it?" inquired the girl.

Miss Church, who was present, sitting by her aunt, turned and bestowed a most supercilious stare on the new chambermaid.

"Kept it? Why, in my jewel-case."

"And your jewel-case was on your dressing-table, ma'am?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Church began to look annoyed, but Sarah asked one more question:

"May we look in your rooms, madam?"

"Certainly. Look everywhere."

She took up a book to show that she considered the interview at an end, and the servants passed out, Anette muttering something about brazen-faced people who didn't know their places.

The servants dispersed in all directions, and began to search for the missing brooch in places likely and unlikely. Sarah Brown walked into Mrs. Church's dressing-room, followed by the Frenchwoman.

"What do you want here, eh?" inquired Anette, in a vinegarish tone.

"I want to look for the brooch," responded Sarah, quietly, stooping down to peep under the dressing-table.

"Bah! *Mon Dieu!*—do you t'ink I not look de room over all?"

"That don't matter. I knew a lady what lost a ring, and it wasn't found for two years, hand when they took up the carpet it was right under the hedge."

"But one ring vill roll, you great stupid, and de brooch vill not."

"I'm going to look here; Mrs. Church said I might."

Sarah looked industriously, moving heavy articles, and always calling upon Anette to assist her.

The French girl soon tired of this work, and pretending to hear her mistress calling, she left the room. Sarah glanced after her, and having ascertained that she had really gone downstairs, she returned to the dressing-table.

A bunch of keys were out of her pocket like a flash, and it was but the work of a moment to fit one to the lock of the dressing-case.

It lay open. On top was a tray containing various articles for the toilet. This being removed, another tray, lined with deep-blue plush, was disclosed.

In it lay an odd-shaped bronze key.

Sarah knew it was the key to the entrance-hall of the pavilion by Borrowdale's description.

It was in her pocket, the dressing-case locked, and she was on her knees by the fireplace when the door opened and Oello entered.

She gave a suspicious look at the chambermaid, who rose with a cry of triumph.

"See, I've found it!"

She held out her hand, and there lay Mrs. Church's brooch.

"Hum! Give it to me and I'll tell Mrs. Church it is found."

"No; I'll tell her myself."

Without noticing, apparently, the scowl Oello bestowed upon her, she hurried away.

Mrs. Church was much pleased to recover her brooch, and handed Sarah Brown twenty dollars as a reward.

"Those vot hides can find," said Anette, spitefully, when she heard of Sarah's good fortune.

"How could Sarah 'ide hanythink in Mrs. Church's room, when she never was there before?" inquired one of the footmen, indignantly.

"Bah! You are one more John Bull," replied Anette, with contempt.

She was naturally angry, for she had been the belle among the servants before Sarah's rosy cheeks stole away their admiration.

"It's a serious business I'm engaged in," said the detective, as he skillfully produced Miss Brown's much-praised bloom with a piece of cotton and a rouge-pot; "but I declare I have to laugh, the girls are so jealous because the men are all trying to mash the new chambermaid."

When all was still that night Knowles and Borrowdale stealthily crept down-stairs, armed with a dark-lantern and the key of the passage to the pavilion. They were about to carefully examine the bath-room door.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DESERTED WIFE.

A LITTLE, golden-haired boy stood at a window looking disconsolately out on the people hurrying by through the chill winter twilight.

He was a beautiful child, with the golden curls, and white open brow of an old Scandinavian race. His features were clearly-cut, but soft and winning, his arched lips red and sweet, and his form stout and muscular, though he was but a baby.

He peered through the window with wide-open eyes, blue as a Northern sky, and filled with unchildlike anxiety and longing.

Near by a little woman sat in a rocking-chair, sewing a bright plaid dress for the boy.

She was but a child herself, with the clear, fresh skin of an infant, trusting blue eyes, and golden hair.

She murmured rather than sung to herself an old Danish song, for Elna was a native of Iceland.

"Mamma," said the boy, wearily, "why doesn't papa come home?"

"I cannot tell, my child," answered the little mother, sadly.

"Well, I'm tired watching for him. How long is it since he came?"

"Four weeks, my boy."

"Was he ever away so long before?" asked the child, leaving the window with a sigh, and taking a seat on a low stool.

"No, never."

"What will we do if he never comes again?" asked the child, looking up in his mother's face earnestly.

"My boy, say not such dreadful things," cried Elna, in a frightened tone.

"But I am afraid, mamma."

"He will come, dear one—he must."

She put the dress aside and took the boy in her arms, where, pillowed upon her breast, he fell asleep.

Elna Hansen was the daughter of a poor clergyman in the Danish island, Iceland. Her parents both had died, leaving herself and two sisters—twins, three years younger than Elna, who was fifteen when she lost her parents.

The orphan sisters were left to the cold charity of an aunt. She was as poor as themselves; but they were used to poverty. What they were not accustomed to, however, was unkindness, and they were almost heart-broken by their aunt's—who treated them like what they were—unwelcome burdens.

Elna tried to comfort her sisters and win her aunt's heart by unremitting toil and cheerful submission; but in vain.

At last, unable to bear the yoke that pressed so cruelly upon her young shoulders, Elna accepted the offer of a family who were going to New York, to act as a governess to their children. She had heard glowing accounts of the fair land of promise, and firmly believed that she would soon be able to send for her sisters.

The family had only kept the girl till they reached New York, when they dismissed her, and going West, left her alone in the strange city, and little better than penniless.

After trying in various ways to obtain work, she procured a situation with a better salary, in a wealthy American family named Parker.

One of her duties as nursery governess was to take the little Parkers out in the Park. She enjoyed this very much. One day a fine-looking gentleman spoke to the children, and formed the acquaintance of the little Danish maiden, whose shy blushes and golden hair impressed him favorably. The children called him Mr. Randolph.

He soon met them every day, and while they

played under the trees he talked with their teacher.

Mr. Randolph soon won her heart, but this newfound bliss soon changed to distress, for the children carried home tales of the delightful meetings under the trees, and poor little Elna was dismissed by their highly-indignant mamma.

Mr. Randolph, however, sought her out, and married her, and then established his girl wife in a pretty home in Harlem.

She was happy, indeed, though her husband was not with her very much. He answered for this by saying that he was occupied by business, and the little Danish wife was not exacting.

She worshiped her handsome husband, and he loved her fondly. Their happiness was increased by the birth of a lovely boy, who was now three years old. Mr. Randolph was exceedingly liberal with his money, and Elna had been enabled to send remittances to her sisters every quarter, which increased their comfort in a marked degree.

Her husband had quietly dissuaded her from sending for them, and she had yielded to his wishes.

To Elna's unbounded surprise she had seen nothing of Randolph for a whole month, as we now introduce her.

The little woman was wild with anxiety. What could his absence mean? Was he ill in some strange place?

She knew nothing of his business, for she was so trusting and unsophisticated that she had never questioned him.

The day after little Dolf had so patiently watched for papa, Elna's little maid announced a visitor.

He was shown in, a burly, red-faced man, and Elna's heart fell. He was Mr. Allen, the house-agent, and the paper he held in his hand was the bill for the month's rent.

"Good-morning, ma'am!" he said, with a cough behind his hand, which seems peculiar to duns.

"How do you do, sir? Sit down."

"Well, ma'am—I guess you are the same; you look so."

Allen had, to make use of his own expression, his "own opinion about Mrs. Randolph's marriage." He also admired her very much, she was always so bright and pleasant—such a picture of pretty neatness.

"I am well, thank you, sir, but terribly uneasy and troubled."

The man's face did not express any surprise. He thought—"Ha! so it has come to an end! Well, they don't generally last so long."

He said nothing, however, and Elna went on:

"Mr. Randolph has not been home for a whole month, and I am very, very uneasy about him."

Again Mr. Allen gave one of his peculiar coughs.

He was not bad-hearted, and he felt unusually sorry for the poor little woman with her child-like face and her bright hair.

"Whereabouts do you write to him when he stops away, ma'am?"

Elna's blue eyes opened wide.

"I've never written to him at all," she replied, growing more frightened by Mr. Allen's manner.

"Well, whereabouts do you send?"

Elna was now ten times more frightened. Her face was white and pitiful.

Mr. Allen murmured a word below his breath in connection with the absent Mr. Randolph; it is a word that is never heard in drawing-rooms; though it sometimes occurs in sermons and hymn-books.

As Elna did not attempt to answer, he changed the form of his question.

"Where do you send when you want money?"

"Nowhere!" cried the little woman in so e distress.

"Do you mean to tell me he has never told you where his business is?"

"No, I never asked him that."

A long whistle sounded from the house-agent's pursed-up lips.

"Well, ma'am, I'm sorry. I wish I could act differently, but you've got to move out."

"Move out?" cried Elna, in astonishment.

"Yes, ma'am—plain English is painful, but I don't see no way to us bettering ourselves by whipping the devil around a stump."

"But when my husband comes he won't be able to find me if I go to another house."

Elna's voice and face were so touching that even Mr. Allen's heart was moved.

"As for finding you, ma'am, he'll do that easy enough, for he'll naturally come and ask me where you've gone, and a good bit of my mind he'll get; and as for another house—don't take a house at all. Is the furniture, carpets, and so forth paid for?"

Elna's astonishment was now unbounded.

"Paid for? Of course!"

"All the better," said Allen, gladly. "Now take my advice, ma'am, and have a nice little sale right here in the house. I'll advertise it right off and won't charge you a cent for the use of the house. Maybe the new tenant will buy your fixings—they always sell to better ad-

vantage in the house—carpets look better and people pay more to save themselves trouble."

"But, Mr. Allen, you must not sell my furniture. I do not owe you one cent."

Elna was innocent, but she was shrewd enough to keep her receipts.

"I never said you did, ma'am!" said the deeply-wounded house-agent. "I know I'm paid up till to-morrow, but I know how you are situated—at least I can guess, and I'm advising you for your own good."

"If that is the case, I am much obliged, but don't you think Mr. Randolph will be angry if he comes home and finds I've broken the house up?"

"I'll only ask one question, ma'am, and it ain't out of curiosity:—How much money have you got?"

Elna's pure face was one great blush. Tears sprung to her sensitive eyes and her soft voice faltered as she replied:

"Very little."

"Well, you can do as you like, ma'am, but I'm old and the father of some girls, and if I was your father I'd advise you not to go paying another month's rent for this whole house. Sell the furniture and that will give you a nice little sum; take a couple of furnished rooms and see what you can do."

"But, Mr. Allen, you are kind, but you speak as if my husband wasn't coming back."

The tears which Elna's womanly pride had kept back so far now ran down her dimpled cheeks, and she had to hide them in her handkerchief.

"Well, you see, ma'am, I've seen a good deal of life, and I've noticed when those husbands goes off in that unexpected way, and don't leave no address—why, I've noticed in my business that—in fact—they never does come back."

Elna was sobbing bitterly, but she lifted her little tear-wet face from its shelter.

"Why, Mr. Allen," she said in agony, "you can't mean—you don't think that Randolph has deserted me?"

Mr. Allen paused, and wild thoughts rushed through his brain of people committing suicide—taking poison, all sorts of things on account of love. He thought Elna looked just as those people might have done—there was such an excess of voiceless, white despair in her face.

"Why no, ma'am," he said, with a husky cheerfulness that surprised himself. "Why, no; most likely Mr. Randolph has been detained by business; but he'll be pleased that you acted so sensible, and saved your money. Maybe it's money troubles that's keeping him away now."

Elna clasped her hands with such a glance of eloquent gratitude that Mr. Allen's heart beat faster with joy that he had told the precious falsehood which the recording angel would surely blot out with a tear.

"Oh! If that's all I don't mind a bit, Mr. Allen; I've been used to money troubles all my life."

"That's all, you may depend," reassured Mr. Allen, clinching his first fist with another unnecessary one, that in fact Elna scarcely heard.

"I'll sell the furniture, since you think it best," said Elna.

"Yes, and I'll help you all I can. What did you do for a living before you met Mr. Randolph?"

"I was a teacher."

"Hum! Teachers ain't paid decent, and they've got to be jam chock-a-block full of references. Would you like to take care of a sick lady?"

"Yes, I'd do anything, but the lady might not like Dolf, though he is not a noisy child."

"Sure enough—the child!"

Mr. Allen was perplexed. The recommendation of Dolf he set down to a fond mother's partiality, and pictured the boy screaming at the top of his voice all day, and blowing a bugle at the same time, which, had he paused to reflect, he would have known to be physically impossible.

"No, she's a nervous woman, which sick women mostly are, and I know she won't like the boy around."

"But what shall I do with h'm?" asked Elna pitifully.

She was neither hopeful nor exacting; she knew how hard it was to earn a living, for she had tried it.

"Take a couple of rooms and keep house. You can hire some little girl to mind the child through the day, and go home to him yourself every night."

"Yes, thank you; that is the best I can do, I suppose; and you can get me a place?"

"I think so; anyhow, I'll try."

Poor Elna! This was hard, after she had known the comforts of a home and the protecting care of a loving husband.

She sighed wearily as she felt that the old struggle must recommence.

Then there was little Dolf to provide for. She could not do as she had done before—find at least the shelter of a roof in the home of her employer.

It was good for her, thought to have the boy dependent upon her efforts. She must for his sake banish grief and summon up courage for the contest.

She did so, and her face showed her stout resolution to do her best and utmost for Randolph's boy.

"That's right," said Mr. Allen encouragingly, as he watched her with keen, though kindly eyes; "brace up and have some style about you. Why, bless your soul, there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught."

Fortunately Elna did not understand this consoling allusion.

So Elna's pretty little home was broken up, and her nice furniture sold, carpets and all, to a lady with a long sealskin dolman and diamond earrings, who required "refreshments" every half-hour—consisting of brandy. Elna didn't like this lady very well, for not only did she suspect that the "refreshments" were telling upon her mentally, but she also more than suspected that her blue-black eyebrows, and dull, glossless, hay-colored hair were not genuine; and that her unnaturally white and crimson complexion was painted. She also was puzzled by the lady's manner.

She was confidential, and said to Elna as she counted out the price of the articles she had purchased: "You ought always to pick out old fellows, they ain't very pleasant, that's a fact, but they ain't so changeable. You see, they haven't got such a choice. Now I hear Mr. Randolph—ain't that the name?—was very handsome?"

Elna looked at the woman with a hot flush of shame for her, that anything female could be so low. The painted face and tousled false hair shocked her sense of neatness and decency, and the coarse looks and words shocked her mentally, for the little woman was purity and cleanliness personified, body and soul.

"I do not understand you, madam," she said, with the mien of a miniature sovereign.

"Oh! very well," replied the other sulkily; "that's all right. I suppose you know your own business best."

"Certainly; good-day."

So Elna left what had been her happy home, and set out to look for work with a heavy heart and a light pocket-book.

"Well," said the house-agent reflectively, as he sat with "Mrs. Molineaux," as the new tenant called herself, drinking lager beer out of a glass without a foot, and eating fried oysters out of a tin pail—"well, I never seen no one take it like that little woman does. Sometimes they takes it in high-styricks—sometimes they takes it in screeching and cussing, and sometimes they takes it in gin."

"She's deep as a well," announced Mrs. Molineaux.

"Well, now, I don't think so. She's got her marriage-certificate, and she is the whitest woman I ever seen."

"How do you know she's married?" inquired the new tenant, helping herself to an oyster.

"Cause I seen the paper. She didn't go to show it to me, only I asked to see the receipts for the furniture in case there might be trouble."

"Who is her husband?"

"I don't know, for I didn't see the name; he went by the name of Randolph; but he was a regular swell, and no mistake."

"But she must know his right name if she's got a marriage-certificate."

"I believe she does."

"Hum! Well, it's a queer start, but I believe she's got badly left."

The house-agent departed, for he took no interest in his tenant, and he was anxious to know how poor little Elna fared.

CHAPTER V.

THE MIDNIGHT VIST.

THE house was very quiet, the family and servants being all fast asleep—when Borrowdale, accompanied by his "niece," stole softly down to the lower hall.

Both wore felt shoes, provided by the detective, and Sarah carried a small dark-lantern.

The gas burned low in the hall, but gave sufficient light for the valet to unlock the entrance to the passage which led to the scene of what Borrowdale now firmly believed to be the murder.

The passage, or hall, was built like the pavilion—of marble; it was lit by gas bracket-lights, with thick white globes, being arranged on either side about six feet apart. It was windowless.

The detective and his companion passed swiftly down the passage to the door of the pavilion. It was shut, but the key was in the lock.

Inside the pavilion was, of course, clothed in darkness. They were soon in the portion of the passage which ran around the singular dwelling. It was, following the shape of the pavilion, eight-sided—or octagon.

The whole building was composed of pure white marble. The doors being of bronze, ornamented with *repousse* work; warlike subjects had been chosen—the figures being chiefly men in armor, Amazons, etc.

The detective did not stop to admire the artistic work of the beautiful building, which he esteemed an extravagant freak of its murdered owner. He signed to Borrowdale to proceed to the bath-room.

"Here we are," exclaimed the valet, pausing

before the entrance of the room where Randolph Church had met his mysterious fate.

This door was not of bronze, but oak, painted white, to correspond with the marble walls of Randolph's bed-chamber.

It was unlocked, and Sarah threw it wide open, flashing the bull's-eye's rays full into the room of the tragedy.

The bath-room was almost a square, being rather longer than wide. On all sides, except the one by which it was entered, there ran a low divan cushioned and covered with pure white silk.

"Hum!" said Knowles; "what abominable extravagance."

"He could afford it," said the valet, apologetically.

"No he couldn't," interrupted the detective, roughly; "no one can. A man with plenty of money ought to have comforts—luxury—but he ought not to make an ass of himself."

"Mr. Church was not an ass!"

Borrowdale looked as he felt, indignant. This was where his kind, generous master had met his death. It seemed sacrilege for any one to speak disrespectfully of him there.

"All right," said Knowles, who was examining the lock of the door.

The fastening was highly ornamental in appearance; but upon being tested it proved to be only an ordinary one. The bolt was of chased bronze; but also of common pattern.

"An old hand," said the detective. He was thinking aloud.

"You think some one gained admittance by that door?"

"Yes; what other way could they?"

The valet glanced helplessly at the window in the domed roof.

"No."

"But how do you account for the fact of my finding the door locked and bolted?"

Knowles gazed at the valet with deep commiseration.

"Well, I declare! Half the people in this world don't know they are born yet."

"I don't understand you," said Borrowdale, looking thoroughly puzzled.

"Don't you? Lock yourself in, and bolt the door."

The valet obeyed. He was in darkness, alone in the room where he had found his master's dead body, and he naturally felt a little nervous.

For a long moment silence reigned; then a sound came on his anxious ear.

It was the click of the key as it fell upon the floor. A skeleton key then unlocked the door. A slight noise about the bolt came next; then the door opened, and there stood the detective!

"Well!" exclaimed the valet, "you've unlocked it. Now lock it!"

"Leave me alone for that."

He replaced the key in the lock and closed the door. In a moment the valet found himself locked in, the bolt was also shot, and the hands that did the work were those of the detective in the bedroom without.

"Would you like to see how that is done?"

Knowles stood smiling with his lantern in his hand, looking comical enough in his disguise of a pretty girl.

"Yes, indeed! Why, I scarcely heard a sound."

"And I don't doubt the man who did the job here that night was much more proficient than I am."

"Show me how it is done."

"All right; I'll put the key in the lock on the other side of the door."

He suited the action to the word. He then inserted a fine pair of nippers, caught the "bit" of the key and turned it.

"The door is locked now," he said; "but you must come in the next room to see me bolt it."

He unlocked the door and led the way to the bedroom. He then placed the key in the inside of the bath-room, shut and locked the door; but before doing so he placed a double silk thread around the pin of the bolt, and carried it through the crevice to the bedroom.

"See? You never noticed me doing that," he said, with a smile. "Wait now."

He shut the door and locked it as before.

He held the thread firmly in one hand and pulled one end with the other; the bolt slipped into its place and the thread was withdrawn.

"Now you see why the door was locked and bolted when you found Mr. Church."

"Yes," assented Borrowdale, quite dumfounded.

"But who the dickens killed him? That's what beats me. I can't for the life of me find a motive."

"Neither can I," answered the valet, sorrowfully.

"Would you like to see the pavilion?" asked he, as they left the bath-room.

"Yes, this is the bedroom. Why don't they sell all these things?"

Knowles looked around him with a blending of curiosity and disgust. The walls were pure white marble and the ceiling was of stained glass, forming the only window; the floor was covered

by a rich Turkish carpet in which crimson and gold were the predominating colors. Several paintings hung on the walls, the subjects of all being scenes from life in ancient Rome. The furniture was of satinwood, upholstered in crimson and white damask. The bedstead was polished brass, and the white silken coverlet magnificently embroidered in crimson and gold. The lighting of the room at night was by an original device—a pillar of opaque glass stood in the center of the room. Borrowdale touched a spring near the floor, and the pillar glowed like a column of opals!

"This was an invention of my poor dead master," explained the valet to the somewhat astonished Sarah.

"Humph! I don't see any paints about it," was Knowles's only acknowledgment.

Opening from this bedroom was the dressing-room, on the right hand, furnished in pale blue, and also fitted up most elaborately with large wardrobes and also a very large closet.

"Master's clothing is still here," said Borrowdale, in a low tone. "Mrs. Church does not give any orders, and I don't know what to do with them."

The room was beautiful, but nothing pleased Knowles. He scoffed at the silver-framed mirrors and numerous suits of elegant wearing apparel, the plush-lined trays filled with jewelry, and the perfume bottles.

"The idea of a man having such a room," he said, scornfully.

On the opposite side of the pavilion to the bed-chamber was the sitting-room. It was furnished like a library, in deep moss-green, and half the walls were lined with well-filled bookshelves.

Everything was luxuriously elegant, but dark-hued and somber. This room was the whole length of the pavilion and almost half its width; it could be entered from the dressing-room or passage.

On the other side of Mr. Church's bed-chamber was the valet's room and a large closet. Borrowdale had no reason to complain, for his room, though smaller, was as elegant as his master's, being furnished in purple plush and ebony.

"So you and your master were lodged like Solomon in all his glory," said Sarah Brown, with a laugh, when they had finished their tour of inspection.

"Yes, Mr. Church had a horror of anything that wasn't beautiful."

"Then he could not have cared much for his cousin."

"No, he didn't; in fact, I believe he disliked her."

"And how did she feel toward him?"

The question was put carelessly, but the detective awaited the answer with anxiety.

"Oh, she really flung herself at his head, though that ain't a nice thing to say about a young lady."

Knowles's sharp eyes glittered.

"I heard something of this before," he remarked.

"Well, it is true. She is a lady, and a rich one, but my master never liked her; nor the Indian nurse, either."

"She's a deep file."

"Oello is, but she is very ignorant and superstitious. Mr. Church had a telephone put in from here to a room in the house and she's scared to death of it. You can't scare her worse than by signaling while she is in the room."

"Well, that is something to know. She has no family, has she?"

"One son."

Knowles looked surprised.

"Why, I never heard of him. Where is he?"

"He lives in New York."

"What is he—a servant?"

"Servant, is it? Why, he is one of the greatest swells you ever saw."

"Is, eh? What's his business?"

"Salesman—or drummer."

"Well, some salesmen make big salaries."

"He must be one of that sort, for he dresses as well as Mr. Church used to."

"It's a wonder he don't take his mother and support her."

"Why, she wouldn't leave Miss Uba, as she calls her, if you gave her a thousand dollars a month."

"She is fond of Miss Church?"

"She loves the ground she walks on."

"But she loves her son just as well?"

"No, I don't believe she does."

"How is it I have never seen this son?"

"Oh, he don't come often; he hasn't been here since Mr. Church's death."

"Perhaps he is away?"

"Maybe so. Well, if you have seen all you want to, I guess we may as well go back to the house."

They returned to the house as noiselessly as they had left it, and parted for the rest of the night.

The detective did not sleep again that night, or rather morning, for the examination of the pavilion had occupied more than an hour.

He had learned some important facts. Miss Church was formerly in love with her cousin, who did not reciprocate her affection. This

story was not idle gossip, but fact. The Indian woman had a son—she loved her nurse-child devotedly. He already knew that the murdered man was often absent from home. No one was aware of this but Borrowdale, and he did not know the cause of his master's absence.

What must be his next step? That was the question that puzzled Knowles.

Oello was very ignorant, and very superstitious—another point. She was very cunning, though, and she had already instinctively felt that in Sarah Brown she had not a friend.

"Her son! I want to see that son," said Knowles to himself as he lay on his narrow couch, unable to sleep. "I want to see him bad."

He made up his mind that he would obtain all the information possible on the subject of Oello's son, and the next day he put his resolution into practice.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CROOK'S WIFE.

In a suit of furnished rooms a lady sat reading.

She was far from handsome, being stout, swarthy, and sullen in expression.

She was quite young, but her heavy face had no other attraction save that of youth. Her pink silk dress was elegantly made and covered with trimming, her jewelry handsome and valuable, but she did not look well-dressed, or, as the ladies aptly term it, "stylish."

"Pshaw! I hate reading," she said with a yawn, throwing the book from her.

She rose and walked up and down the apartment, which was, like most of its kind—furnished with odds and ends picked up at sales—faded and broken, with a dismal attempt at fineness and splendor that resembled flowers in the room with a corpse.

The marble mantle was handsome, for, in the upward march of New York city, the wealthy leave traces of their grandeur behind them, and the house where the sulky lady lived had once been the residence of wealth and elegance.

Its chief recommendation now was as set forth in advertisement—it was "central." It suited the sulky lady's husband in this respect, for he was a confidence man—gambler—shover of the queer—general crook, etc.

"I hate this place," said the angry woman, looking around in deep disgust at the soiled plush furniture—the carpet, with its big, sprawling pattern, and the dirty lace curtains. The tarnished chandelier, cheap pictures, and gaudy broken-and-mended-again mantle ornaments.

She sat down and placed her arms on a marble-topped table that tipsily rocked to and fro when touched.

"I hate the house—the woman—the street—everything! I wish I hated Erny, too, for then I'd leave him. My love for him has cost me dear indeed. I married him, the son of Oello, the old slave nurse; then, knowing that my aunt would never receive the son of a slave into her proud family, I consented that his sister, Sura, should personate me and take my place as the heiress—Miss Church, from Peru. Too late—all too late!—I see my folly. The girl I detest lives in splendor, while I, the true heiress, pine here!—and the husband for whose sake I have done it all neglects me."

Listlessly she gazed out of the dingy window into the busy street, a sullen frown, a revengeful expression on her heavy face.

She was very dark, and her pronunciation, though correct, proved that English was not her native tongue. Her hair was coarse and straight, her brow low, and her features common and insignificant; her small, deep-set eyes were full of passion, however, and her full lips spoke of a nature where sense predominated over intellect.

She was a woman of powerful passions, strong feelings, and great obstinacy—this real Ubalina. Her love would be intense, but not self-sacrificing, and her enmity would be bitter and relentless.

Hers was the love that accompanies jealousy. She would, in truth, murder its object rather than suffer another to enjoy it, or triumph over her. A dangerous woman, with the heart of a savage. Cruel even in her fondness, and deathlessly revengeful, was the wife of the slave-woman's son.

A tap at the door disturbed her, and she glanced up as a visitor entered—a tall lady clad in deep mourning. She threw back her veil and revealed the face of Oello, the Indian nurse.

"Well, Uba?" she said, coolly, without shaking hands or kissing her hostess, whose gloomy face wore no welcoming smile.

"Well, Oello, so your scheme has fallen through?"

"Yes," and the flash from the Indian's eyes spoke volumes of malice.

"Well, what is the next move?"

"Nothing."

The lady of the sullen face seemed to take a delight in exciting Oello's anger.

"Well, I always thought it would prove a failure," she said, carelessly.

Oello had seated herself near the heater—fire there was none, and the day was bitterly cold.

"Erny thought he could prevent me from finding out anything about the sudden death of the intended bridegroom, but I take care to have the *Herald* brought to me every day."

"I should have told you—why not?"

The daughter-in-law looked surprised.

"Well, I suppose he thought as Sura's plans were overturned I might as well assume my proper position."

"He is not a fool," replied Oello, coldly.

"What do you mean?"

Mrs. Stanard—that was the name she was known by—looked disturbed as well as astonished.

"Do you suppose that her son's death will make your aunt more willing to receive Erny as a member of her family?"

"No, I don't."

"Then what are you talking about?"

Oello spoke impatiently.

"I am sick and tired of this miserable farce that I have too long consented to play."

The tone of the young woman's voice was menacing, and her face corresponded with her tone.

"It was partly your own plan," said the Indian woman, carelessly.

"Yes, I love Erny, and I saw no other way; I preferred him to wealth—honor—position."

"Do you see any other way now?"

"No."

"Then what do you mean by telling me you are sick of the farce?"

Young Mrs. Stanard was silent. She was angry and longed to quarrel, and punish some one, but Oello was not to be trifled with. Many a battle had raged between them, and the mother-in-law had ever been the victor.

"You say you love Erny. You insisted upon marrying him, although I advised you against the step. Now you are tired of him."

"I'm not!"

"Well, if you are you can't help yourself. He is your husband all the same."

Oello now looked threatening; her eyes flashed, and the savage blood in her veins betrayed itself in her thin lips curled back from her gleaming teeth.

"I never said I did not love Erny;—I do love him, and you know it."

Her defiant sullenness was not subdued.

"If he hears you complain he will not be a burden upon your movements very long. He is too high-spirited and too proud."

Uba now looked thoroughly frightened. The Indian knew her weak spot, and the weapon to use against her.

"My son is a man any woman would love. He can soon console himself," she said, contemptuously.

A dull red glowed on the cheek of the other. She bit her lip savagely. She felt the taunt bitterly.

"It is a pity your daughter, the false Uba, is not equally beautiful and fascinating; she then might have produced the proper effect upon Mr. Church."

Blow for blow. Uba knew just where to strike Oello also.

The sharp lightning of her glance showed that she was hard hit, but she betrayed the fact in no other way.

"Yes, it is a pity," she replied, slowly; "but I seem fated in that respect; neither of my daughters possesses great beauty."

Uba did not find a suitable answer, so she judiciously remained silent.

"About Sura," resumed Oello, in a different tone. "Mrs. Church is much attached to her, and never lets her go out of her sight."

"That is well. In case anything should happen, Sura's future is safe."

"You know better. Mrs. Church is a woman who would never forgive any person who imposed upon or deceived her."

"Then she will cherish undying animosity against all of us."

"Yes; I well realize that."

"Well, we must only contain our souls in patience till the end comes."

"She must make her will first," said Oello, significantly.

"Why, if she dies, Sura, in her capacity of niece, will inherit everything."

"Not inevitably. She may will the whole fortune to charity."

"Pshaw! She is not that kind of person."

"How do you know?"

"True, I've never seen her, but I judge from what I hear."

"Nothing is certain—let me tell you that."

"Well, you are all playing for high stakes. I have my own mother's fortune, and I intend to keep it."

"Unless your uncle invests it in some scheme, and loses it."

"He is not a fool."

"No, but he is a speculator."

"He has never speculated with my money."

"Because he never had a good chance. You took it out of your guardian's hands when you married, and that is only a little over a year ago."

"Yes, my guardian was an old fool."

"Well, I hope you are as safe as you think."

"Which means that you would like to see me

without bread to eat," thought the daughter-in-law.

She was right. Oello really hated her, bitterly.

"Does my aunt seem at all disposed to be charitable?"

"No, but she has other relatives—a woman named Mabel, who lives with her, as you know."

"She cordially detests that woman, so Sura says."

"Yes, but she is her own niece, and Mrs. Church is a woman who believes implicitly in family."

"Then she ought to be thoroughly satisfied with present arrangements," sneered the daughter-in-law.

"Yes; no doubt she would be if she understood them. But I must go."

"What haste?"

"Oh, it is unnecessary for you to remind me that my visits are unwelcome. I came because I was obliged to—I wished to see Erny."

"Then this is the last place for you to visit."

"You mean he is seldom at home?"

"Exactly."

"His business keeps him away."

Oello's manner became more polite—in fact, conciliatory. It was evident she did not wish to lose the one hold she had over her daughter-in-law—namely, the passionate love the latter felt for her husband.

"His business—sufficiently mysterious, no doubt—keeps him away."

"You need not be so scornful. You knew he was not a rich man when you married him."

"No, but I see other business men keep regular hours. Erny's business seems to be done at night, and all sorts of out-of-the-way times. I never know when he will be home. I think it is useless for you to wait for his coming."

"I don't intend to, good-by."

The parting was as cold as the meeting had been unamiable.

"Old wretch!" said young Mrs. Stanard, when her husband's mother was out of hearing.

"Spiteful devil!" muttered Oello, when she had descended the steps and was clear of the house.

Near the corner she met her son.

"I have been looking for you," she said, joyfully.

"Well, here I am."

And the young man turned and accompanied his mother up Broadway—his home, for the time, being but a block away on Twelfth street.

"I've news for you," said Oello.

"Of a pleasant nature, I hope."

"Not very. Your wife is in a dangerous humor."

"She always is," declared the husband, with a shrug of his shoulders, which expressed the utmost indifference.

"Yes, but she is unusually dangerous now."

"Well, I cannot help it. I always told you she only lacked brains to be a perfect fiend."

"You are right. I am afraid to trust her with the child."

"Did you tell her?"

"No. I would not when I found what sort of humor she was in."

"Uba is always in the same humor," observed Stanard, gloomily. "I hate the sight of her, and sooner or later she will find it out."

Oello looked alarmed. They walked on till they reached a restaurant, which they entered for the purpose of continuing their conversation.

Stanard gave an order, and then said, with a determined look about his mouth:

"The fact is, I'm tired of the whole business. You made up the scheme, and it has fallen through. I am always the victim, and I think I'll take my discharge, or send in my resignation."

"Then you'll undo all we have done."

The Indian woman was alarmed by his manner.

"Well, what of it? We have accomplished nothing."

"Cannot you have a little patience? The worst is over."

"What do I gain by waiting?"

"Everything. Mrs. Church is failing fast."

"And when she has failed, what comes next?"

"We step into her fortune."

"And are hampered with two she-devils."

"Sura is no devil."

"Wait till she has the power to act."

"You are unreasonable. I need not talk to you."

Oello now looked angry. Stanard reflected deeply. He had no intention of acting as he threatened. As his wife said, the stakes were heavy, and he was by instinct a gambler.

"How long do you suppose it will be before you find the wife and child?" he asked, at length.

"I cannot tell. The only clue I have is this."

She half drew a photograph from her pocket-book.

"Let me see."

Stanard gazed upon the pictured face with a peculiar expression in his dark eyes.

"A lovely face," he said, slowly.

"Yes. She is pretty enough. Give me the photograph. A nice hunt I'll have, no doubt."

"Let me keep the picture. I'll find the girl."

There was a certain cagerness in his look and tone that escaped Oello's notice—she was drawing on her gloves preparatory to leaving the restaurant, otherwise she would have remarked it.

"You certainly will be able to do it more easily than I can," she remarked, as if glad of the proffered assistance.

"You could not leave the house without being missed."

"No, I could not."

"It may take months to find her though."

"No doubt it will take time and trouble."

"Are you certain that she is in New York?"

"Yes, he said so."

"Well, I'll try what I can do. I'll devote my spare time to the work. A third of the time it would take you to find her I'll do it."

"And the child?"

"I'll attend to that also. Consider it done."

"And you think it will be safe to trust Uba with the child?"

"Yes; I know why."

"Well, I'll depend upon you, and I'm glad you are willing to undertake the task. I have so little time to myself, and can find no reasonable excuse for being away from the house."

"As I said before, I'll do my best, and let you know the result."

They parted. Oello took the up-town stage, and her son strolled in the opposite direction.

"Well, this will make a change," he said, as he lit a cigar. "And having the child in my possession will give me immense power over Sura. I don't trust her—I never did, even if she is my sister!"

CHAPTER VII.

LUCIFER.

ELNA'S anxiety, which was maddening, prevented her from making use of her best efforts to obtain work for herself and a home for little Dolf.

She found, however, two neat and, above all, cheap rooms on Seventy-fifth street. She retained the services of her one domestic, a Swedish girl named Christine. The girl was fond of Dolf, and that alone was sufficient to make Elna fond of her.

Mr. Allen had been faithful to his promise; he had obtained a position for the deserted wife—as he really supposed her to be.

True, she only earned a mere pittance, but while the money she had obtained by the sale of her furniture held out she was at least in no danger of starving. After it was exhausted, she must trust in the God who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb."

She was nurse and housekeeper to an invalid lady, and that lady was none other than Mrs. Knowles, the wife of the detective who was trying to ferret out the mystery of Randolph Church's death!

Mrs. Knowles was a gentle, kind creature, and seemed interested in her new nurse. She suffered from a spinal affection, and was almost totally helpless. Her clear, pale face already resembled the face of an angel in some old painting, and strangers were always alarmed by the thought that death was very near. Her husband and her physician, however, knew better. She would probably linger on for many years.

Elna was as happy as she could be in her husband's absence. She worried constantly, and her ear was forever on the alert, hoping to catch the sound of his dearly-loved voice, but Mrs. Knowles consoled her with the greatest tact and delicacy.

With well-meant deceitfulness she pretended to think Randolph's absence the most natural thing in the world.

"My husband goes away in exactly the same manner," she said, cheerfully; "perhaps yours is in the same business."

"What is your husband's business?" asked the poor little wife, with such an earnest wish to be comforted in her blue eyes.

"He is a detective, and he is liable to be called away at any time."

"And doesn't he let you know where he has gone?" asked Elna, hopefully.

"No; it would never do for detectives to do so," replied the sick woman, inwardly adding, in the words of the old Scotch song: "The Lord forgi'e me for leein'."

"Then Randolph is a detective?" said Elna, her lovely face flushed with joy, her eyes shining.

"Oh! how much obliged to you I am! Thank you so much, dear Mrs. Knowles."

All her doubts had vanished; only the aching heart still longed for her husband.

Little Dolf, childlike, was pleased with his new surroundings. He no longer fretted for papa. His joy when his mother returned from her work at night almost consoled Elna for her husband's absence, since Mrs. Knowles said it was so usual for detectives to disappear suddenly and leave no trail to guide their sorrowing families.

Elna was very simple and unworldly. Many girls half her age were ten times as quick to observe and fifty times as quick to suspect.

Her love for Randolph remained unchanged, and her confidence in him unbroken.

One night, as Elna was returning to her humble home, she met with a little adventure. She stopped before a small store to look at some simple toys displayed in the window. Taking her portmonnaie from her pocket, she began to turn over its contents with rather a mournful look. She was puzzled to know whether she ought to decide in favor of a top, which Dolf longed for, or a pair of shoes, which he required. As she stood hesitating, a rough-looking man pushed rudely by, snatching, as he did, her pocket-book from her hands.

Elna uttered a cry and sprang after the snatcher, who darted around the corner.

"Hallo!" cried a stranger, into whose arms she rushed.

"Excuse me," said Elna; "that man robbed me, and I was running after him!"

The thief was now nearly out of sight, and it was useless to pursue him; the streets were slippery, and twilight had already fallen.

"Has he robbed you of a large sum?" inquired the gentleman, with interest.

"No, only a few dollars," Elna was surprised to find that the stranger stood gazing at her with such marked interest, and she colored deeply, and, saying, "Well, it is no use to mourn over what is lost; good-evening, sir," she was about to turn away.

"Excuse me," said he, "if I am apparently forward, but will you tell me your name?"

The young woman's fair face was crimson to the golden bang that fringed her brow.

"I really—" she began, boldly.

"Pardon me," said the man, earnestly. "If I am not in error, I have been searching for you."

The thought flashed to her mind that her husband had sent this man to look for her, as she had left the home he had provided.

"My name is Elna Randolph," she said, turning pale. What if Randolph were ill?

"Then I was right. Is not this your photograph?"

Ernest Stanard, for he was the man, drew the picture from his pocket that he had received from his mother.

He was thoroughly accustomed to deceiving people by dissembling and false statements.

It came into his mind that he could easily persuade this "little greenhorn," as he termed her in his own language, that he was an intimate and trusted friend of her husband.

Elna started, violently; she recognized the picture at a glance.

"Why, that is the photograph I gave my husband!" she exclaimed, a quick flash returning to her white cheeks, and a look of fear to her large blue eyes.

"Exactly! Well, I thought I recognized you." Ernest managed to throw into his tone great apparent sympathy.

"Oh! what is the matter?" cried Elna, clasping her hands, her lips quivering, her eyes dilated with terror.

"Nothing; only Randolph has been obliged to go away."

"Is that all? Are you sure, quite sure, he is not ill?"

The poor little wife's pitiful looks and tones touched even the gambler's cold heart.

"Yes, he is not ill, I assure you; he is quite well."

"Thank God!" She uttered the words so fervently that Stanard involuntarily raised his hat.

If some good spirit had whispered in her ear a warning word!

If she had only known the Lucifer to whom she spoke!

"Come to my home with me," she said, for the agitation was too much for her; she felt faint.

"Certainly; with pleasure."

They walked on to Elna's door. Her rooms were on the second floor, and one of them overlooked the street. There little Dolf always took up his stand, watching for mamma. Mrs. Knowles was considerate of Elna, and dispensed with her services at seven o'clock, trusting to her other attendant to care for her during the night. She did this because she knew the girl longed for the solace of her child's company.

Little Dolf caught a glimpse of his mother's form under the gas-light. Seeing a man beside her, he naturally made the mistake of supposing it to be his father.

"Christine!" he shouted in glee, "papa and mamma!"

With these words he joyfully started from the chair on which he had been standing, and ran down stairs.

The boy was nimble, but his excitement made him heedless; he caught his foot in the stair-carpet, and falling headlong, rolled down stairs, and as Elna opened the door, he lay senseless at her feet.

"Oh! my Dolf is killed!" she screamed, wildly, for the corner of the balustrade had caught his head and blood flowed freely from a wound on his temple.

"No, he is not killed," said Stanard, consolingly, as he raised the boy and carried him upstairs in his arms, Elna following, sobbing bitterly.

"I'll run for a doctor," said Ernest, as he placed the unconscious child in bed.

In a moment he was gone, and by the time Elna had bound up Dolf's wounded head he had returned with a medical man.

The doctor consoled the terrified little mother, and under his care Dolf soon opened his eyes and began to cry with fright and pain.

The doctor pronounced the hurt nothing serious, and after writing a prescription, and dressing the child's head, he left, saying he would return the following day.

"How thankful I am to you," said Elna, to Stanard, when the child was resting comfortably, and she had time to attend to her guest.

"Do not speak of it."

While Elna's mind was distracted by her fears for her child the gambler had formed his scheme. He had planned his story, and when she requested him to be seated while she removed her hat and bathed her face he was ready with his tale of duplicity.

"Tell me all about my husband," she said, returning to the sitting-room, and taking a seat near him.

"Well, he told me to visit you and explain how he had been called away suddenly. I lost the address very foolishly, and was searching everywhere when, fortunately, I met you."

"The address would not have helped you unless you found the house-agent, for I have moved," said Elna.

She was so innocent that it hardly cost the artful sharper an effort to master the whole situation. He learned the story from her own lips, and did this so cleverly that she fancied her husband had told him all the history of their married life, and any suspicions she might have had, vanished.

Randolf trusted this man; he must be his friend; otherwise, how did he know all about him?

Stanard was too artful to tell Elna anything she did not know. He led her on to talk, ascertained that she imagined her husband was a detective, and corroborated all that Mrs. Knowles had said on the subject.

"Surely she knows his proper name," said the gambler, to himself. "Can he have married her under an assumed name?"

By a little skillful questioning he found out that Elna knew that her husband did not use his full name. Also that she never read the daily papers, and had never heard of the very sudden death of Randolph Church.

All the excitement attendant on that mysterious death had died away. At least, so Stanard supposed, for of course he knew nothing of the detective's presence in the house in the disguise of the chambermaid, Sarah Brown.

Before he left her he had secured Elna's full confidence, and inspired the belief that he was a faithful friend of her absent husband.

Randolf, he informed her, had gone West on a case of peculiar importance. She might not hear of him for months. Of course it would have been utterly impossible to impose upon her credulity in such a manner had she known anything about detectives—their habits, etc.—but she was perfectly ignorant on the subject, and believed Ernest's story more readily because it coincided with all Mrs. Knowles had said.

"One thing I must tell you," observed Stanard, after he had acquired all the information he required in order to carry out his infamous plot.

"What is that?" asked Elna.

"Your husband left plenty of money in my hands for the use of you self and your child. He will be much annoyed when he hears that you are in the position of nurse."

Elna looked pained. She felt sorry that she had taken Mr. Allen's advice, which at the time it was given had appeared so sensible.

"I had not heard from him—I did not know," she stammered.

"Well, I'll tell him it was his own fault, and you had better give up your position at once."

It would never do, the treacherous plotter reflected, to leave Elna in the employment of a detective's wife.

"Very well; I'll go and see Mrs. Knowles to-morrow morning."

"Better write her a letter now and I'll post it. Be independent."

"She has been so kind to me, and she is very ill," pleaded Elna.

"Well, write her a nice note, and go some other time to call upon her."

"Very well."

She seated herself and wrote a letter to Mrs. Knowles, in which she stated that her husband had sent a friend of his to find her—and that it was no longer necessary for her to be parted from her child.

"Good-by," said Stanard, as he secured the letter. "Now you need not leave your boy again. Let me be certain you are well supplied with money."

He handed her a roll of bills, for which she thanked him earnestly.

"I'll look in to-morrow to see how our little

man goes on," he said, as he took her hand to say farewell.

"Thank you. Believe me, I am very grateful to you for all your kindness."

"Nonsense. I am Randolph's friend; that is all."

"I'll tell him how true, how kind a friend you have proved yourself," Elna assured, feelingly.

Had he possessed one spark of honesty or principle, a blush of shame must have risen to his face at her innocent words, but he did not.

"I hope to prove so, indeed," he responded, with great apparent earnestness; and so they parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TWO NIECES.

MRS. CHURCH was attached to her husband's niece, in her cold, proud fashion. Her own nearest relative, the humble Mabel, had, on the contrary, never found favor in her eyes.

She was too humble and unobtrusive to force herself on the notice of the haughty woman on whom she was dependent, and her bitter poverty made her extremely sensitive.

The orphan daughter of a clergyman, whom her mother had married in opposition to the wishes of her proud family, Mabel Nelson had felt to her heart's core the slights and contemptuous treatment of her haughty aunt. She remembered her home in the pleasant country town where she was born, how plain and unpretending it was, yet how happy, where love had cheerfully reigned, and peace hovered over the roof-tree, a welcome and glad visitant.

She was not very young when she lost both parents, but her life had not been a life of training to fit her for a struggle for bread, and she was not of a pushing, energetic disposition. She had written to her aunt when her mother had been called away with fearful suddenness by heart-disease, but Mrs. Church had merely sent a coldly-worded letter of condolence.

When Mr. Nelson followed his wife within a year, Mabel had written again. In reply came a letter penned by Mrs. Flutter, inclosing a check for funeral expenses, and a cold invitation for Mabel to make her home with her aunt.

Not knowing what else to do the stricken woman had availed herself of it, but she knew, ere she reached the stately mansion, that she was no welcome guest, and every day of her life she realized the painful fact more fully.

She had been five years an inmate of the house when Ubaldina Church arrived with her Peruvian nurse. The girl had at once taken a dislike to the meek, uncomplaining woman, and had from the first treated her with contempt.

Oello had often protested against her more than unkind treatment of the inoffensive woman who moved through the house so humbly and mildly, but her remonstrances apparently did more harm than good.

What made the vindictive little Creole dislike poor Mabel more than anything else, was that Randolph really liked her, and displayed the utmost respect and kindness in his treatment of his orphaned cousin.

Mrs. Church's proud heart could find no place for the dependent Mabel; she disliked her meek, pale face, her humble ways, and what she deemed her want of spirit. She thought that Mabel had inherited her disposition from her father, who was of lowly origin. The meeker and more humble the niece was, the more the proud mistress of the house despised her.

Ubaldina Church suited her far better. That young lady had certainly no want of temper and spirit. She was sufficiently proud and imperious.

"Pride of birth and blood," declared Mrs. Church, admiringly, "are proper and becoming."

After the death of Randolph his mother sensibly faded day by day. Ubaldina was her constant companion, for the artful girl knew that in a great measure her future depended upon Mrs. Church.

Randolf had inherited his father's fortune with the exception of a handsome sum which the elder Mr. Church had left to his widow. Mrs. Church was now the possessor of all, for her son had died intestate, and, as was supposed, without an heir. His mother, as next of kin, was therefore the mistress of the whole fortune.

Ubaldina dared not request her aunt to make her will, but she longed to hear that it had been done, for if Mrs. Church died without disposing of her property by will, Mabel Nelson's claim would be equal to her own.

Little did the stately old lady think, when she spoke of pride of birth and blood, that her supposed niece was the daughter of a Chunchos Indian woman, whose husband had been an escaped felon!

Such was, however, the case, as we already have explained. The real Ubaldina Church had when still a mere child, learned to love the son of her nurse. His mother seeing, with all her native cunning, that such a marriage would be of advantage to herself and family, had consented to be present while the young girl was secretly married to Ernest.

She well knew the family of the bride would never consent, so the real Uba was not presented to her haughty aunt, while Oello's own daughter,

Sura, undertook to act the role of the Peruvian heiress, and thus far she had done so successfully. She was of an artful nature, and had been educated with Ubaldina. She was the brighter and quicker of the two, and far pleasanter in her manner than the real Miss Church, who had herself planned this scheme to deceive her relatives and have her own way.

Ubaldina was married to Ernest, as stated before they left Lima, and Sura—subtle, artful, unprincipled Sura—made up her mind to marry Randolph even before she ever saw him—determined to make him marry her, whether he liked her or not.

This scheme had not proven successful, however. The young Creole soon learned to love the handsome, frank young man with all the force of her fiery nature, but she had never been able to awaken any responsive feeling in his heart. Indeed, she knew he did not love her, but then intrigued to the end that he would consent to marry her to please his mother, who ardently longed to see Ubaldina's fortune united to Randolph's and the pride and prestige of the house thus preserved and perpetuated.

In furtherance of her schemes Sura pretended to bestow her confidence upon Mrs. Church, telling that lady how dearly she had learned to love Randolph, and Mrs. Church had promised her supposed niece that the marriage would take place at once.

Oello had not approved of her daughter's action. She felt that the girl, with all her artfulness, had blundered, for the wily Indian suspected the truth—namely, that Randolph Church was not a free man. She sought an interview with him and obtained it. Then she had learned the whole story.

Randolph was a married man and the father of a son! He only refrained from acknowledging his wife and child out of consideration for his mother.

She was so proud, so ambitious, that he well knew she would be terribly shocked and angry when she learned he had married beneath him, and she would certainly consider his wife too plebeian for a Church.

Oello's blood flashed hotly when the Indian learned the truth. Her daughter's long-matured plans were foiled! Sura could never bear his name and reign a queen in the stately mansion.

And then, too, as soon as the real Ubaldina Church grew tired of her humble position the false heiress must go forth—denounced as an impostor.

The thought drove Oello nearly mad.

CHAPTER IX.

A MOTHER'S GRIEF.

ERNEST STANARD lost no time in cultivating his acquaintance with Elna. His design upon little Dolf was one motive, but another and more powerful one animated him:—he loved the pure-faced, gentle little girl whose beauty and sweetness contrasted so forcibly with Ubaldina's dark face and sullen maners.

True, he was not free, but he was a desperate, unprincipled man. He had never loved his wife, and he no longer even tolerated her. Why should he not regain his freedom by means which he did not whisper even to himself?

Elna was Randolph Church's widow. Her son was his heir. Ubaldina held her fortune in her own hands and was not generous.

Dark plans and thoughts passed through his brain. He was at once crafty and cruel. His passions were powerful as those of his father's, for Spanish blood coursed through his veins, but he had all the slow cool deliberation of the Indian character inherited from his mother.

His was a complex nature, and he had drawn all the bad traits from each parentage, and none of the generosity of most passionate men; he was crafty like his dark-skinned mother, but he lacked her unselfish devotion and faithful love, for when Oello loved she loved faithfully as a dog.

Elna, of course, could not comprehend such a character as Ernest's. She had been reared in a simple, honest home, and fancied a man who came to her honorably and kindly must be good. A man who looked in her face with clear eyes and spoke in a pleasant, straightforward way could not be other than he represented himself.

So she accepted Stanard as a friend of her husband's—a kind, honorable gentleman.

He went home one day after an interview with Elna, his mind full of horrible thoughts. His wife met him with a frown upon her dark, unlovely brow.

"Where have you been?" she demanded, harshly.

"About my business," replied Stanard, throwing himself into a chair and returning her angry look.

"Very extraordinary business yours is," she sneered.

"Very."

He liked to provoke her, and cared not how much she suffered.

"I'll tell you something," she said, after a pause, during which her husband could see the arteries in her throat throbbing violently, betraying her furious temper.

"Well?"

"I'm going to relieve your sister of her arduous task of playing the lady."

"Indeed! I'm glad to hear it."

She expected to alarm him, and saw that she had failed.

"Yes, she can retire to her old position of chambermaid."

"No doubt she will be delighted. It must be difficult to sustain the role of such a refined lady as—yourself!"

A dull red flushed her face. She felt cut to the heart. He could wound her, for she loved him.

"No matter. I'm tired of neglect, and the dull, aimless existence I lead."

"So am I. I shall return joyfully to Peru, and go in for my old work."

"What do you mean?" she asked, sharply.

"What I say. You are perfectly well aware that your aunt will not receive me."

"I do not see why not."

She was alarmed, as he intended she should be. She might threaten and talk rashly, but the thought of absolutely parting from him was death to her. He knew his power and he abused it.

"You are perfectly well aware that Mrs. Church despises servants as much as she does her niece."

He spoke in an injured tone, as if his feelings had been deeply wounded.

"Ernesto!"

She was at his side, her arms about his neck, her lips upon his forehead.

"You know I never meant that," she said, tenderly. "How can you say so, my own husband?"

"You spoke of my mother—my sister," he said, reproachfully.

"Oh! Ernesto mio—I love you—you know I do!"

A world of tenderness shone in her dark face and sounded in her voice. She looked glorified by the power of womanly feeling and wifely love. Her face was almost beautiful.

"Yes, Uba," he replied, softly. "I know you love me. You stooped to marry so far beneath you, my beautiful wife; but you are proud, and you repent your rashness. You are sorry you married the base-born Ernesto. You repent; and what is left for me to do? Go away and die!"

He buried his face on her breast and pretended to sob.

"No, no, my own!" cried Ubaldina, clasping him passionately to her heart. "Never shall I part from my darling husband! Rather would I die—ten times over!"

She meant it; there was truth in her face, in the ring of her voice. She loved him with all the force and fire of her nature, warm as the clime which gave her birth.

"But you weary of your dull life—you long for other company—a happier, freer life," he said, gently struggling as if to free himself from her embrace, and speaking in an aggrieved tone—as if deeply wounded.

"No, no; I shall never speak so again. I am happy now—very happy."

A cruel smile curled his lips unseen by his wife, on whose faithful heart his head rested.

"Are you happy? Will you have patience for a little while?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Church fades day by day. When she is gone, then we will claim all."

"But Sura?"

She took a seat near him, still holding his hand in hers.

"What of her?"

"She may influence Mrs. Church to leave everything to her."

"She will leave everything to her niece, Ubaldina Church."

"Yes, and—"

"We can readily prove that Sura has no claim upon that name."

"But how can we account for the deception we have practiced?"

"Tell the truth. You are Ubaldina, the niece of Mrs. Church."

"But Sura will be in possession; suppose she declares us impostors?"

"She dare not."

"You cannot tell. I fancy she will."

"If she does, I have a remedy."

He spoke so significantly that his wife looked up in surprise.

"What is your remedy?" she asked, eagerly.

"Randolph Church was married."

"No."

"Yes, he left a widow."

"Then how did Sura expect to win his heart?"

"She did not know."

"How did you learn this?"

"I found out that he was secretly married, four years ago."

Ubaldina looked thoroughly mystified.

"But how can that help us?" she inquired, in a puzzled tone.

"I'll tell you, my dear wife," answered the treacherous Stanard, affectionately. "This widow has a child. I'll obtain this child and give him to you. Then you have Sura in your power."

"How?"

"Why, don't you see, my angel? Randolph Church died intestate; his son is his heir, and we have his son in our possession. If Mrs. Church makes a will and dies, Sura, even if she claims everything, cannot dispute the child's claim; it certainly goes before hers."

"And Sura will not be able to get anything?"

"No. Mrs. Church does not know that her grandson exists, so she can't disinherit him even if she had the power, which she has not."

"And how about Mabel?"

"Mabel will get nothing, unless her aunt leaves her a trifle from her own private fortune."

"I see."

"But we reckon without our host. I've not been able to find the child yet."

Stanard's motto was, "Never tell the truth if falsehoods will answer your purpose."

"Can I assist you?"

"No, darling; it is enough to worry you with the boy after he is found."

"I shall not mind that. You know I love children."

"She winced as she uttered the words; one of her greatest griefs was that she was a childless wife."

"Well, dearest, you can have the boy. Probably he is a pretty child. His father was a handsome man."

"Yes, and the boy is my own cousin. I wish we had him here now."

"You shall have him as soon as I can find him, but if Sura visits you—not one word to her of who or what he is!"

"No. She might try to steal him. Does your mother know of him?"

"No."

Stanard always wove a double web when a single one would answer the purpose.

Ubaldina was restored to good humor, and her husband soon left her to attend to his mysterious business.

She now looked forward to the arrival of the boy as a certainty, and with a feverish longing. She loved children, and she was desperately lonely. Then, too, she would have power over Sura, whom she heartily detested—hated with all the intensity of her nature.

She more than suspected that the artful daughter of the Indian woman would give her trouble when the time came for her to give up her false splendor and return to the humble position she had formerly occupied.

Sura had been educated with Ubaldina, but the heiress had never allowed her to forget that she was a servant and the daughter of a slave. No love had ever existed between them, for Ubaldina disliked and despised Sura, and Sura envied and detested Ubaldina.

Oello naturally loved her own daughter better than her nurse-child; indeed, her savage nature impelled a strong feeling of jealousy against the infant she was forced by circumstances to tend to the neglect of her own.

Ernest felt satisfied that he need lose no time in robbing Elna of her boy. After this interview with his deceived wife the way seemed clear enough to the artful schemer.

His plan was all matured. The boy would be lost. He would express great sympathy for the afflicted mother, and by degrees win her heart; he could enact the double role of faithful friend and counselor. Then, when the proper time arrived, he would break gently to her the news that she was a widow, and as soon as her grief had in a measure subsided would proffer his faithful heart and induce her to marry him.

This was his diabolical scheme, and he at once set about carrying it out.

Elna had never left Dolf since the day of his accident, but she feared that Mrs. Knowles might think her ungrateful and remiss; so three weeks after the evening of the child's fall, she made up her mind to visit her friend.

Dolf was well again and happy in the possession of a fine rocking-horse presented by his kind friend, Mr. Stevens—the name Stanard had given.

Christine promised that she would take excellent care of him, and Elna set off with a light heart.

Mrs. Knowles received her very kindly, but showed no little surprise when Elna told the history of her husband's friend and all his kindness.

Though the detective's wife had told the poor little woman the story of detectives leaving their homes and wives with such scant ceremony, she had of course only done so to console her, and meant no harm. Now she fully realized that harm had come of her well-meant kindness. She knew that Elna had been imposed upon, and blamed herself for it.

"And this man tells you he is your husband's friend?" she said, slowly, her bright eyes fixed on the pure child-like face before her.

"Yes, and he has been so very, very kind."

"Elna, I am sorry to be the one to disabuse your mind of the belief in this seeming friend, but I am sure the man is imposing upon you."

"What?" gasped the little woman in amazement.

"Yes, and the worst of it is that it is partly my fault, for I told you a falsehood, though God knows it was a well-intentioned one."

"What do you mean, Mrs. Knowles?"

Elna had grown pale as snow, and she trembled so violently that the invalid was afraid she would faint.

"Why, my dear child, detectives *don't* go off and leave their wives without saying why or wherefore. This man has taken advantage of your ignorance of the world."

"But you told me they did!" cried Elna, reproachfully.

"I know I did, and I was a fool for my pains. I pitied you so that I would have sworn black was white if I thought it would have comforted you to think so; but honesty is the best policy, as we all find out after we try the other sorts. Now, Elna, don't look so frightened; listen to reason and I'll tell you the truth."

"Go on," said Elna, faintly, clasping her hands together and bracing herself to hear something terrible.

"Well, dear, I don't believe your husband—was a detective at all."

"Then why did you say so?"

"Because, as I have told you, I'd have said anything. Never mind that part. You say this man has got your photograph?"

"Yes."

"The same one you gave your husband?"

"Yes."

"Well, dear, you'll have to bear it like other poor souls do. Your husband has deceived and deserted you."

"No! No!"

The cry came like the cry of a wounded hare.

"I know it is hard, though I don't know how hard, thank God!" said Mrs. Knowles, tears springing to her big, sympathetic eyes.

"It is *not* true," retorted Elna, bravely, the color coming back to her white face. "I would be a wicked woman to stay here and listen to such accusations."

She rose to her feet indignantly, for anger had restored her strength.

"Well, my dear, I must say it—you are a foolish one," replied her friend, hotly, for, like most invalids, her patience was not inexhaustible.

"I shall not lose confidence in my husband," answered Elna.

"Well, keep it, though I'm sorry for you."

The little woman rose to go. She was terribly angry. Her husband spoken of in such a manner!—openly accused of being a deceiver!

She put on her hat, cloak and gloves with trembling hands, while her eyes shone like dark blue fire, and her cheeks glowed deep crimson as the heart of a rose.

"Good-by," said her friend, sadly, as she saw her preparing to depart in such an angry mood.

"Good-by, madam," returned the aggrieved wife, coldly.

"Shake hands, Elna, and if you need a friend remember me."

"Thank you."

Elna took the slim white hand in hers, and suffered Mrs. Knowles to kiss her hot cheek, which was wet with angry tears.

"Good-by," she said, in a choked voice, and she was gone. Out in the fresh cold air she felt calmer and better.

It was dark already, and cold-eyed stars were blinking out through the purple haze of a wintry night. Elna's anger subsided, gradually. Mrs. Knowles meant well, and, after all, she did not know Randolph. She judged him by other men. When he returned she would take him to the sick lady's bedside, and then she could see how mistaken she had been in her estimate of his noble, manly character.

With these thoughts Elna hastened home, for she had spent the greater portion of the day with her friend. As she drew near her dwelling she saw, to her surprise, Christine coming toward her, with her handkerchief to her face.

"Dolf!" gasped the mother in an agony of terror.

"Oh! missus—missus—gone!" sobbed the girl.

"What do you mean?" Elna grasped the girl's arm and shook her roughly.

"I left him for a moment to fetch a pail of water and he's gone."

"Gone where?"

Elna asked the question with a quiet calmness, the outcome of extreme fear.

The distracted little mother accepted well-intended offers of help which did not avail, for midnight fell on the desolate home, and Dolf had not been found.

Morning broke in due course and still the rooms were, in Elna's estimation, empty, for her boy's rosy face was not there, his joyous voice was silent.

There stood his latest treasure—the wonderfully-spotted rocking-horse. There lay one scarlet mitten, and a piece of candy, but Dolf was gone.

As daylight gazed in, gray-eyed and cold, the little mother broke down, and Christine, whose red, tear-swollen face spoke eloquently of her remorseful grief, half-carried her to bed.

There she lay, weeping and refusing to be comforted, for, like Rachel, her child "was not."

CHAPTER X.

A VOICE AT MIDNIGHT.

SARAH BROWN had studied the household, and got them "down fine."

One of two things she (or rather he) was satisfied was the case:

Either Randolph Church had died a natural death in his marble bath-room, and Borrowdale's zeal had outrun his discretion, or some member of the household had murdered him.

Knowles had interviewed the undertaker, who declared that the marks on Mr. Church's neck were the marks made by the neck-rest in the ice-box.

Why might not this be the case? What earthly reason had any one to murder the young man? Apparently, none whatever.

The servants all loved him for his generous, easy nature. His mother loved him because he was her son and a Church. One of his cousins, the rich one, loved him because he was kind to her, and felt for her in her unenviable position of the slighted poor relation.

Out of all this houseful of loving people, who would steal into that pavilion and strangle Mr. Church?

Oello, the Chunchos squaw? How ridiculous! Knowles laughed when the idea occurred to him. So did Borrowdale, when he mentioned it to him.

They both laughed; but they did not forget that the thought had occurred to them both.

The suspicion did not die, though it was so weak and fragile that a breath of air might kill it—so weak that it had to be kept hidden; honest daylight and one gleam of common sense would surely cause it to wither up and perish.

Still it lived, weak though it was; it possessed wonderful vitality. It lived, and grew and strengthened.

Oello hated Sarah Brown; so did the false Ubaldina Church. So did the French maid, Anette.

The keen eyes of the chambermaid seemed to look right through these people and render them uncomfortable.

One person the detective longed to see—that was Oello's son.

It was some time before he was gratified; but one day the woman was called down-stairs by the footman, who announced—"Your son wishes to see you."

Sarah Brown started for the housekeeper's room. She did not regard a frown from the Indian, or, if she did, looked upon it in a friendly fashion.

She saw the son; but she did not understand what he said when he addressed his mother, and for the good reason that he spoke Spanish.

Sarah Brown could not, of course, remain during the interview in the housekeeper's room.

She staid long enough, however, to make up her mind about Oello's son.

"That is the man who can tell the secret of the death in the pavilion if he likes," was her conclusion.

The next day Sarah went out for two hours. When she returned she carried a large parcel.

The following day Oello went out and was gone all the afternoon. She looked angry when she returned. She had an interview with Miss Church and they both grew excited over their conversation.

This much Knowles knew, for, like some chambermaids, Sarah was not above listening at keyholes; but what good was it when people spoke Spanish?

That night a strange thing came to pass; Oello's room was a large one, at the end of the corridor. On one side of it was a spare chamber which was never occupied by any member of the family, being reserved for guests. At the other side was a sitting-room where the ladies sat occasionally during the day. Oello's door faced the wide hall staircase. The house was of magnificent proportions and the Indian woman was really isolated from the rest of the family. She preferred to be so, for she had no friends among the other servants.

This room was large; two long windows overlooked the garden, but not on one side where the pavilion reared its head. They were draped with heavy plush curtains of a deep maroon color; the furniture was in keeping, and the appearance of the chamber was somewhat gloomy for the carpet and wall-hangings were dark.

Oello evidently possessed no taste in fitting up her apartment to render it cheerful or homelike; no little knick-knacks betrayed a woman's presence; it looked bare and melancholy.

The bed was a very large one and stood next to the guest chamber, in the corner by the wall.

It was midnight and the Indian woman was preparing for rest. The hour chimed from the great hall clock. As the last stroke sounded, a shrill voice exclaimed:

"*Randolph Church was murdered!*"

Oello dropped the hair brush she had been using, and her heart stood still.

From whence did the words proceed?

From the wall near her bed!

Again came the ominous words, spoken slowly with an accusing ring in their mysterious accents:

"*Randolph Church was murdered!*"

The woman almost fell as she made a rush for the door.

Once more, before she reached it, came the voice; and once again the words were shouted after her as she fled.

She flew like a spirit to her daughter's room. Sura sat before the fire with a book upon her knee. She was not reading, however, and she looked sad and dejected.

"What's the matter?" she asked, as Oello darted in, casting a terrified look behind her.

"Sura!" gasped the affrighted woman, clasping her daughter in her arms.

"Hush! Are you mad?"

She shook off her mother's arms and sprang to her feet to close the door, which Oello had left wide open.

"No; but, my child—there is a spirit in my room."

"Nonsense!"

"There is, truly. It spoke to me—"

She trembled so violently that she could scarcely stand, and her copper-tinted skin was a sickly yellow hue.

"What absurd folly!" cried Sura impatiently, and she darted a look of contempt on her mother. "Come and see for yourself," she added, for the girl was superior to the mother's ignorant superstitions.

"No, no, not for millions of dollars!" answered Oello, with a shudder.

"Please yourself," replied her daughter, scornfully.

"I tell you I heard the very words it uttered!"

Oello drew a chair to the fire and seated herself.

"Are you going to remain here?" inquired Sura, coldly.

"Yes, I am."

"Very well. I'll lock the door."

She did so, and returning to her place took up her book with a yawn.

Oello's black eyes fixed themselves on her daughter's face with a peculiar expression.

Certainly the young lady had not shown much sympathy with her mother's terrors, and had accorded her but a cold reception.

"If you are not greatly interested in that book I'd like to speak to you," she said, after a silence of some fifteen minutes.

"Go on."

The young lady laid down the volume, languidly, and turned to her mother.

"I saw Ubaldina to-day."

"So I am aware."

"Well, she has us in her power now."

"In what way?"

In spite of her assumed calmness the young lady looked anxious.

"She has Randolph Church's child in her possession."

"Does she know to whom it belongs?"

"No."

Carrying out his plan of deceiving both, Ernest had instructed Ubaldina to feign ignorance of the child's parentage, and told his mother it was better to keep his wife in the dark on the subject. Thus both women were deceived.

"Well, if she does not know whose child it is, I cannot see why the fact of having possession of it can change her much."

She spoke in a weary, half-contemptuous tone.

"She was changed before—she is tired of the false life she is forced to lead."

"Tired of her husband. I fully expected it from the first."

"She is not tired of Ernest."

"Well, what's the matter then?"

"She is afraid Mrs. Church may die and leave everything to you."

A glitter of triumph shone from the catlike eyes of the impostor.

"So she will," she said, smilingly.

"I know what you think, but how can it avail you?"

"I don't understand."

"She will leave her fortune to her niece, Ubaldina Church."

"Well, I am her niece, Ubaldina Church!"

"What?"

Astonishment electrified Oello. She sprang to her feet.

"See here," said Sura, calmly signing to her mother to seat herself. "I'll defy her. Let her prove her identity if she can!"

"But this was not what we agreed," stammered Oello.

"No matter; possession is nine points of the law. I'm in possession of the name and the place. Let her displace me—if she can!"

A cold glitter shone in her eyes and her thin lips took a curve of cruel determination.

"What!" cried Oello, in evident astonishment.

"I've been making up my mind to a far different course of action than you planned," added Sura, half defiantly.

"You have, and without consulting me?"

"Yes, for I am sure you do not lack skill and courage to assist me."

"Go on."

"I'll keep my position. No one can put me out of it. Mrs. Church is dying by inches. I

am a favorite of hers and shall be her heiress. Be bold, and let nothing frighten you."

"But Ernest?"

"Defy him! Let them both do their worst."

"But Ubaldina has the proofs of her birth. Her guardian may come to New York."

"Her guardian will do nothing of the sort. He has not forgiven her for taking her money out of his hands and giving it to her uncle."

"She may call upon her uncle. No, your scheme is impracticable."

Sura bit her lips savagely.

"I wish she had heart-disease, also," she said, with a frown.

"She has not. You will have to depend on her bounty."

"Never!"

She sprung from her chair, and paced the floor with angry strides, her thin red lips pressed close together, her eyes flashing.

"I hate her!" she hissed.

"I know you do."

The Indian woman watched her daughter with keenest interest.

Another watched them both—the detective Knowles, but he could not understand one word of the conversation, which was carried on in Spanish.

He had formed a hiding-place in a large closet and by rearranging some plaques he managed to conceal a small opening which he had easily made in the wall.

There he spent weary hours, but could discover nothing, for Oello and her daughter habitually used the Spanish tongue when they conversed together.

One thing, however, Knowles had seen—that was, Oello's terror over the unseen accuser—her midnight visitor. He knew the supposed spirit voice had struck terror to her heart.

But never had he been engaged on such a peculiar case; he was baffled at every turn.

He did not understand one word of Spanish, and to save his life he could not have found any motive for the crime, if any had been committed.

Like the coroner, he began to think Randolph Church had died a natural death.

CHAPTER XI.

DOLF'S NEW HOME.

CHRISTINE'S statement that she had only left Dolf for a very short time was one that was excusable under the circumstances, but not strictly true.

Like most pretty girls Christine had an admirer. He was employed in a grocery-store near her home, and she sometimes lingered longer than was strictly necessary to make her little purchases.

Elna's absence gave the girl an opportunity to visit the store where Fritz's white apron and red cheeks shone to such advantage.

Dolf promised to be a good boy, and the wire gauze arrangement to keep him away from the fire was securely fastened—the windows safe and the matches all put away in the closet, the key of which was in Christine's apron pocket.

Under the circumstances, she thought she might slip out and purchase a trifle from her blue-eyed adorer.

Alas! the moments flew so fast in his company that half an hour passed, and when Christine returned hastily, with an anxious face, to the room where she had left the boy, he was gone!

Some one had visited the rooms in her absence; the child's cloak and hat were missing, and one of his mittens lay on the floor, dropped by whoever took him away.

Christine, wild with grief and fear, eagerly questioned the people in the house, but they had not seen or heard anything unusual. The house door had been open for a short time while the landlady's children watched a monkey which accompanied an organ-grinder on his musical way up the street, so the child might have slipped out among the other children, or some stranger might have slipped in.

Dolf was gone, and did not return. Search for him proved vain; no trace or track could be discovered, and Elna's grief had settled into dumb despair, when her friend, Mr. Stanard, called upon her.

He was full of sympathy, of course. He was hopeful, too; he cheered the poor, forlorn little mother, and insisted that the boy would be found. Skilled detectives must be set to work; no time must be lost, and off started the anxious friend to find or rescue the lost child.

Elna thanked him kindly, with tears in her big, childlike eyes, and flushes of hope coming and going on her pure cheeks. He left her cheered and comforted by his visit; but nothing came of it. Days passed, and weeks elapsed, and still the child was not restored to its broken-hearted mother.

When Christine left him the child had played with his blocks contentedly till he heard a footstep, and saw a stranger enter the room.

"Well, Dolf," said the new-comer, "where's mamma?"

"Gone to see Mrs. Know," replied the boy, who was not at all shy.

"Will you come with me and see the monkey?"

"What monkey?"

"Out here. Come and see."

He placed the child upon a chair and listened to his cries of delight when the active little animal climbed up to the windows of the opposite house. He also gave Dolf candy, which pleased him still more.

"Would you like to go in the street and give the monkey this?" asked the stranger, exhibiting a bright quarter.

"Oh, yes; but mamma says I must never go down to the door without her or Christine."

"Well, Christine is there. Besides, mamma sent me to take you for a walk. Where's your hat?"

Nothing loth, the child found his hat, his warm plush coat, and knitted leggings and mits, all of which the stranger hurriedly put on for him. They then descended the stairs and passed out among the children unnoticed.

They watched the monkey only for a moment, Dolf putting the new quarter in the cup the animal held out to him.

"Now we will go in the car," said Dolf's new friend.

Of course the boy was delighted, especially as he was informed that he was going to Mrs. Know's to see mamma.

He rode quite a long distance, and then walked several blocks; he was getting tired when they arrived at a house, and he was at once taken into a parlor, when his outside garments were removed.

"Where's mamma?" he asked, looking around anxiously.

His new friend did not reply, but a lady came forward and said kindly:

"Mamma will soon be here."

Dolf looked at her very hard. Children are keen physiognomists. He knew the lady was disposed to be friendly, but he did not trust her.

The man who had enticed him from home had disappeared, and he began to feel uneasy.

"I want mamma!"

His red lips began to quiver and his blue eyes to fill, but Christine had told him "big boys" never cried, and he could not bear to be called "a baby," so he bravely choked back the sobs that rose to his little throat.

"Mamma will soon be here, dear."

The lady seated herself beside him and removed his one mitten.

"I guess the other is lost," he said, looking the lady in the face. Her eyes were filled with wonder and admiration at the boy's pink and white baby beauty, which seemed more than beautiful to her on account of its novelty. She had been brought up among the dark sons and daughters of Peru, and was unused to blonde children.

"You are a very pretty boy," she said; "has mamma got any more?"

"No—only me. I ain't a baby."

"No, I see that you are not. You are a little man," said Ubaldina, artfully.

"Yes; when I'm big enough I'm going to look for papa, if he don't come home."

Ubaldina was delighted with the child's company, and took so much trouble to entertain him that he remained quite content until night fell. Then his heart grew very full; he wanted his mother.

In vain his new friend gave him fruit and candy, toys and picture-books. He refused to be comforted, and at length forgot his manhood and cried loud and long.

Mrs. Stanard had prepared the landlady for this by telling her of a poor lady who had been deserted by her husband, and whose poverty induced her to part with her child, which, she added, she intended to adopt.

Dolf's loud cries and heavy sobs therefore attracted no attention, and he at length cried himself to sleep in a very handsome brass cot which had been purchased for him by his new mamma.

His tears wet the beautiful rose-colored silk quilt, and his little face was swollen and disfigured, but he was still at last, with a bunch of the lace which trimmed his linen pillow grasped in his fat fist.

"May I see him?" asked the landlady, as she stole in on tip-toe, curious to see "the baby."

"Yes," replied Ubaldina, who sat by the crib with the gas turned down very low, scarcely daring to breathe for fear of disturbing her treasure.

"He's a lovely boy. It must have broken the mother's heart to give him up."

"She felt it, of course, but hush!" Dolf stirred.

"Come away," whispered the landlady. "He ain't used to any one watching him that way—"

"How do you know?"

Ubaldina's ignorance on the subject of children was simply complete. The landlady knew this and took advantage of it.

"Why, bless you, ain't I raised six, and two little blessed angels in Calvary? I knows them."

So Ubaldina followed her to the parlor and listened to the history of all the six from their births up. How they took one ailment after the other till it seemed incredible that they could still live and move and have their being.

Ubaldina allowed her to talk on, and told her a straight story about the boy which perfectly

agreed with what the landlady was able to extract from the "pretty dear" next day, by dint of what would be termed by opposing counsel in court—"leading questions."

Dolf cried all the next day and most of the next night—refused to eat, and drooped so visibly that his adopted mother grew frightened.

In the afternoon of the following day, however, her husband appeared. Dolf knew him, and was delighted to see him.

"Will you take me to mamma?" he asked, eagerly catching Stanard's hand in his.

"No, dear; mamma has gone away to look for papa."

Dolf buried his face on the seat of a chair and wept bitterly.

Ubaldina looked on compassionately. She was already attached to the little fellow. He was such a noble, manly child.

"Will she find him?" he asked, after a long cry had in a measure eased his full heart.

"I hope so, Dolf; but this lady is your new mamma. Don't you love her?"

The boy raised his head and regarded Ubaldina earnestly.

"I love her," he said, slowly, while tears streamed down his cheeks; "but she ain't pretty like my own mamma."

A heartless laugh was Stanard's reply to this unfortunate remark.

Mrs. Stanard's face took on its dull glow which always appeared when she was angry.

"So your mamma is very pretty?" she said, sharply.

"Yes."

"Hum!"

"Nonsense, Uba! Every child thinks the same. I remember when I fancied my mother was a regular beauty."

"Oh, yes; no doubt it is natural."

She passed it off lightly; but she did not forget it. She instantly determined to ascertain, by questioning the child, whether her husband had been in the habit of visiting his mother.

This was an easy matter, and the boy answered readily all her questions as soon as her husband left them alone together.

Yes—that man came often to see them. Every day? Yes. Did his mother like him? Oh, yes.

How long had he been coming?

Oh, a long time—weeks and weeks.

Before his father left?

Dolf paused before replying to this query, and tried to remember.

Yes—he concluded; the gentleman came before his father left.

Was he sure?

Oh, yes; he was sure.

Ubaldina bit her lips savagely. She was furiously jealous of that child's mother, and rightly guessed that she must be beautiful.

"So this accounts for the very mysterious absences from home," she muttered savagely, as she walked up and down, clinching her hand and biting her lips.

"I'll hire some one to take care of the boy, and I'll follow him."

She determined upon this course, and lost no time in carrying out her resolve. The first thing to be done was to secure a nurse for the child. The next was to disguise herself. She could not do this in the house without exciting remark, for the landlady was of an observant nature.

Finally she concluded the best way would be to engage a room in some other portion of the city.

This idea she acted on, but it involved her in fresh difficulties. How was she to find her husband when she knew none of his resorts?

She studied for some time, and at length thought the best thing she could do was to engage the services of an assistant.

Little did she think how serious were the matters and secrets she prepared herself to unravel.

The chance remark innocently made by the child was the key which was fated to unlock the whole secret of his father's fate.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VOICE AT MIDNIGHT.

THE false Ubaldina Church was not quite proof against her mother's superstitious fears.

When Oello ran to her room, two nights after she paid her first visit, and declared in an agony of terror that the spirit had again invaded her apartment, the girl rose and accompanied the Peruvian woman to the room which Oello stonily declared to be haunted.

"I do not understand how you can be so foolish," she said, impatiently.

"Well, come and see."

They entered the gloomy chamber where the gas burned low.

"If you are nervous, why do you turn down the lights?"

The question came from Sura's lips impatiently.

"I don't," replied her mother, with a terrified glance at the chandelier where four gas jets feebly burned. Sura looked at them with her keen, cat-like gaze.

"That is odd," she said, slowly. The burners were all turned on full!

Suddenly, from the corner of the room, came the accusing voice—the same terrible sentence slowly repeated:

"*Randolf Church was murdered!*"

Oello grasped Sura's arm in the intensity of her fear, and her eyes grew so large they seemed starting from their sockets.

The girl, also, looked frightened. She rallied, however. Dragging her arm out of her mother's hands, she darted across the room, exclaiming:

"Some one is hidden under the bed or in the closets!"

She searched the room unsuccessfully; no one was there!

Again the mysterious words came to the terrified woman, for Sura was as much alarmed as her mother. Then all was silent.

The gas of its own accord sprung up and burned brightly, revealing the pale, affrighted faces of the Indian woman and her daughter.

"Well!"

"Well, there is a way to account for all this."

"Account for it, then."

Oello was thoroughly imbued with the idea that a spirit was the midnight accuser, but Sura was not. She had been educated too well to accept such an explanation of the mystery.

"I am going to search the next room," she said, resolutely.

Taking some matches from a stand upon the dressing-table, she started.

"That room is locked, I think," returned Oello, following her daughter, for no power on earth would have induced her to remain alone in the "haunted room."

"No, it is open. See!"

Sura threw the door wide open and advancing boldly, struck a match and lit the gas. The guest-chamber stood revealed, silent and tenantless.

"There!"

Oello's terrors had increased. The room had but one door, that opening on the corridor, and no one could have left the guest-chamber and passed the open door of Oello's room without being seen.

Sura looked surprised, but was still of the opinion that the accusing voice could be accounted for.

"This is a trick, I do not doubt," she said, half-angrily.

Oello shrugged her shoulders.

"You are like all well-educated people—too wise to believe what you hear and see."

She spoke in a low, earnest tone, and looked as she felt—thoroughly frightened.

"I am convinced that a person, and not a ghost, uttered those words."

"Where is the person, then?"

A large warbrobe stood on the further side of the room. Sura resolutely walked across the floor and turning the key which was in the lock, she threw it open.

It was empty!

"Well, I'm at my wits' end to account for your unpleasant midnight visitor, I admit," she confessed, as she turned out the gas and left the room, followed by her mother.

"Yes; how can it be any living person who speaks?"

"I fear that new girl."

"Sarah Brown?"

"Yes, Sarah Brown."

"She is an unnecessary servant to feed and pay, but she is harmless."

"I don't think so."

They were now in Sura's chamber, the door shut and locked.

"What harm can she do?"

"She is Borrowdale's niece."

"Well, what of it?"

"Borrowdale is a spy."

"You don't mean that he suspects anything?" and Oello's death-pale face grew a shade whiter.

"Yes, he suspects something."

"What makes you think so?"

Sura glanced around her with a catlike caution peculiar to her.

She need not have feared listeners, however, for they spoke, as they always did when conversing alone, in Spanish.

"Yesterday," she went on to say, "I was going out, and as I came down-stairs Borrowdale and the butler were in the hall talking. They did not hear my footsteps and I caught a fragment of their conversation."

"What was it?"

The Indian was excited; her eyes blazed with an anxious, feverish light, and her thin lips were parted. At that moment the resemblance between mother and daughter was absolutely startling.

"It was this—or rather this is all I heard: the valet said, 'I've been so frightened I'd be discharged, but they don't suspect,' and the butler said, 'Even if they did, it's Mrs. Church who has all the say,' and Borrowdale answered, 'Yes, but she would be angry if she thought I knew anything and kept it to myself.' So you see, they do suspect something, and we are surrounded by dangers."

Oello reflected silently.

"I'm afraid to trust Ubaldina, and I dread Ernest."

"What do you mean?"

"He is tired of her, and she is madly jealous of him. If he makes her angry she will pause at nothing to have her revenge."

Sura laughed scornfully—a joyless, heartless laugh.

"As I said before, my mind is made up; my feet are on the pathway to fortune; I'll never turn aside; I defy Ubaldina!"

Oello's fears were stronger, for she dreaded unknown, unseen powers.

No sleep visited the burning eyes of the plotters that night. They tossed uneasily upon the downy couch they shared, for Oello refused to return to her own chamber.

The weight of a black crime is not easily borne, and no truer words were ever spoken than these:

"The way of the transgressor is hard!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GREEN DETECTIVE.

Most people who have never had any business dealings with detectives regard them in a curious way.

The gambler's wife fancied that a detective, male or female, would be able to trace every move her husband made without attracting his notice in the slightest degree.

She was ignorant of the fact that a crook's life is spent in evading the laws, and that all its branches and ramifications are as familiar to him as his daily bread.

Her husband could not be shadowed for half an hour without being perfectly well aware of the fact.

Besides, there are in the business detectives and other detectives.

Ubaldina got hold of one of the other detectives.

He was a small man who had not been long in the profession—in fact he was a detective bureau on his own account.

If he had only come up to his own opinion of himself, he would have been magnificent; but, unfortunately, there was nothing great about him except this opinion.

This man was the father of a large and lazy family, consisting of a fat wife and four daughters. He was honest and hard-working, but he lacked that subtle essential which brings success.

Good-fortune, like a will-of-the-whisp, ever eluded his grasp. He was always "just going" to succeed, but that was as far as he ever got.

Worse men got on better, and men who never tried one-half so hard, walked, ay, and rode, by poor little Sandy Martin, dressed in the eighteenth, or rather nineteenth century equivalent for "purple and fine-twined linen," while Sandy trudged through the mire in second-hand garments that Solomon Isaacs assured him fitted "joist like as de paper on de wall."

Sandy belonged to the genus poor but deserving. He seemed in the eyes of the world to deserve poverty, and he got it. He had tried every trade and profession, staying in each long enough to become thoroughly discouraged.

A lucky hit by a man who had been a friend of Sandy's while he was poor, turned the little man's attention to detectives.

Other people succeed in that business, why should not he?

Mrs. Martin languidly listened to his plans and hopes, and Sandy went out and begged the loan of sufficient money to hire an office and insert an advertisement.

After some work on contingencies, for which of course he never received one cent, Sandy became the paid and salaried detective of Mrs. Stanard.

That lady little knew how ill-starred was her choice, but the race is not always to the swift, and even ill-luck sometimes gets tired of following up the same unfortunate wretch.

So it proved with Sandy Martin.

Of course nothing more comical could well be imagined than Sandy trying to shadow one of the most artful of the many cunning crooks of New York.

Ernest Stanard amused himself and drained his wife's purse by keeping his shadow dancing all over the city from one resort of unsavory reputation to another.

Sandy saw and heard things that made his well-brought-up New England hair stand upon end.

Whenever Stanard wished to get rid of Sandy he "shook him" with the greatest ease.

Stanard not only knew that it was his wife who had sent Sandy after him, but he also shrewdly guessed the reason.

He had not forgotten the expression of her face when little Dolf innocently spoke of his mother's beauty. He knew the fierce jealousy that burned in her heart whenever she had or imagined she had, the slightest cause to suspect that his love for her waned.

An oath found its way bitterly through his teeth when he first realized that he was being shadowed, and it was only when he saw how utterly incapable was his wife's agent that amusement took the place of anger.

Poor Sandy was of course "as clay in the hands of the potter."

A green detective trying to follow up the keenest scamp in the city!

He was honest, though; he did not spend one cent more than he could help of Ubaldina's money. Drink was no temptation to him, and vice in all its forms he simply loathed.

He never suspected what Stanard's occupation was. He supposed him to be a gentleman of wealth and leisure addicted to fast acquaintances and questionable amusements.

The poor little man's eyes would have opened had he known what sort of a husband his client was blest with.

Fortunately he did not.

Mrs. Stanard had followed up her plan and engaged a room where she met her detective. It was a handsome parlor, and the landlady looked askance at Martin's shabby form and well-worn garments, till Ubaldina told her a portion of the truth. Then she was delighted—the affair was so sensational and romantic!

Still she had a nervous horror of anything terrible taking place in her rooms. She dreaded what she vaguely described as "shooting-matches," with all the fears of a "genteel person."

Mrs. Stanard tried to reassure her, but it was not till she heard with her own ladylike ear (applied to the crack of the folding-doors) that Ubaldina's husband knew nothing of his wife's movements that she felt at all easy.

"When you have proved to me that my husband loves another woman and I am convinced, I shall leave him," she said calmly. "Until I am convinced, no matter how much I suspect, I cannot act."

"You will then enter an action—file an application?" inquired Martin nervously.

"No. I shall simply leave him. I am very wealthy in my own right, and I can return to my home."

This quiet, composed talk accomplished two things: it reassured Martin, who was afraid to tell Ubaldina even the little he knew for fear of making her so angry that she would act violently, and it eased Mrs. Holmes, the lady of the house.

Mrs. Stanard knew this; she had spoken for that purpose!

Ernest was too deep and treacherous to hint to his wife that he well knew she was employing a detective to shadow him. She felt no change in his manner toward her, even though he was filled with resentment.

His plots were nearly ripe and he was merciless. He loved Elna more passionately every time he saw her, and he hated his wife more intensely.

"I'll rid myself of her," he muttered, as he sat in the firelight playing with Dolf, and watching his wife, who sat on the other side of the fire with the warm light playing on her dark face.

"Elna, my golden-haired angel, how happy will I be with you!"

How little did the hated wife dream of the dark thoughts this man harbored against her.

She suspected him, but only of being attracted by a fairer face. How little she knew him!

As she sat there watching his play with the boy, who, as time wore on, became more reconciled to his enforced separation from his mother, she felt that her love for him was one that must endure while her life lasted.

And he—had already doomed her to death.

Yes, he was determined to wait no longer.

Elna was free; he believed she had already begun to care for him.

Why delay?

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEQUAL COMPACT.

KNOWLES was discouraged; he had not made any progress worth the name. He was "stopped" on every side by unexpected obstacles. He understood no Spanish, and all the conversations between Oello and her daughter were conducted in that language. So listening was useless.

Ernest Stanard had never been to the house since he took up his residence there. Six weeks had elapsed since his advent as Sarah Brown, and the mystery that clouded Randolph Church's fate still hung over it.

He had heard the butler's suspicions which coincided with those of Borrowdale, but they were not directed against any one in particular, though, like Borrowdale, the butler disliked the South American nurse.

"I believe Randolph Church died as the coroner said—of heart-disease," Knowles decided, at length.

"I don't, but I don't think any one in New York will find out how he did die," replied the butler, firmly.

Borrowdale had thought it safer and better to keep up the disguise before Simpson, so the butler believed Sarah Brown to be Borrowdale's niece—a green English girl.

"I've tried the ghost dodge," said the detective, musingly. "What'll I try next?"

He knew Oello had been terribly frightened by the unseen accuser. But what did that avail him when he could not understand the chance confession she let fall in her terror?

As the three sat in the butler's pantry discussing the question, a ring at the bell sounded

through the house. It proved to be a letter for Knowles, addressed to Sarah Brown. It was from his wife, who had been very ill and requested his return home.

"So that settles it," announced Knowles. "I'll go, and really, Borrowdale, though I hate to let anything beat me, I must acknowledge that this beats me. If your master was murdered, I'm afraid the murderer will get off scot free."

"I trust not," rejoined the valet, with the look of one who was deeply disappointed.

"Well, it passes my skill. If any one did the job, the Indian had a hand in it."

"Leave the room haunted?" asked Borrowdale, significantly.

"Certainly. Let me know if anything turns up."

So Sarah Brown found that the work was too hard for her and left. Oello and her daughter were both surprised and relieved by her departure.

"I believe that mystery will always remain a mystery," concluded Knowles, as he left the mansion, just as wise as he had been when he entered it.

"Unless the valet was mistaken, which I am inclined to think."

So in doubt he went away.

He found his wife very ill, and for some days all his attention was claimed by her.

Suddenly, from an unexpected quarter, came a new light upon the mystery of the pavilion.

Ernest Stanard visited Elna very frequently, though he took good care that Sandy Martin was none the wiser.

The bereaved little woman was well-nigh heart-broken, and would have succumbed to her grief if her "husband's friend," Mr. Stevens, had not kept hope alive in her breast by pretended clues he was following up as to the recovery of her boy.

Her husband, he said, was in the far West, and he created fresh anxiety in her almost frenzied mind by faintly and vaguely hinting at dangers which surrounded and hemmed in the existence of detectives.

He deemed this necessary, for she must soon be told the terrible truth, namely—that her husband was cold in death.

Then he was certain she would turn to him for comfort and consolation; then the hour of his triumph would come.

How happy he should be with the pure-faced, golden-haired girl he had learned to love so passionately!—the innocent being who had won his black, treacherous, murderous heart!

Poor Elna! The dark destiny that overshadowed her was fortunately hidden, or she would have been driven mad by the terrible prospect and have sought oblivion in the cold embrace of the river.

Stanard sought her one day, some three weeks after the disappearance of Dolf. She sat by a cheerless fire, her bright head drooped, her chin in her hand and her elbow on her knee.

"Good-day!" the heartless fiend saluted.

"How do you do?"

Her sad, pale face brightened a little, and a look of expectancy came in her big wistful blue eyes.

"I am well; and you?"

He sat down near her, and fixed his eyes tenderly on her face.

"Oh! So anxious, so nearly hopeless!" she murmured, choking back a sob.

"Cheer up! Do you know, I think I've heard of our boy?"

Hope sprung up in a red tide to her care-pale cheeks, and her lips trembled as she eagerly asked:

"Oh! Where?"

"Don't become so excited, I beg," and Ernest laid his hand upon her arm which had grown pitifully slim, "don't!"

"How can I help it?" asked Elna meekly; "but tell me, oh! do!"

Her pleading would have melted a heart of stone, but the gambler's heart was made of nothing so honest as stone.

"Well, I will tell you, but do not set your hopes too high for the clew may be a false one."

"What have you heard? Oh! tell me! I'll try not to hope too much."

Her blue eyes shone like stars through the heavy mist of an April night.

"I have heard that he is in Boston," said this Lucifer, on the spur of the moment.

"Oh! Let us start at once and find him!" cried the excited mother.

"Wait; don't make me regret telling you this."

"No—no! I'll be so quiet—so patient."

She was trembling from head to foot, but she tried with all her might to appear composed.

"Well, I have not yet obtained any certain information. I shall do so, however; meanwhile be quiet and remain indoors. I have reason to suppose some enemy has employed a spy to watch us."

"Enemy!" repeated Elna in the greatest surprise. "Why, I have not an enemy in the world!"

"Then who robbed you of your child?"

She grew deathly pale. Her child in the

hands of an enemy! This was a new and terrible view of the subject. She had fancied some one had stolen the boy on account of his beauty, to adopt him as their own, but if he was in the hands of an enemy he might be cruelly treated—murdered!

Her mother's heart called up fearful pictures of her child—beaten—starved—tortured—perhaps dead or dying.

"Oh, what shall I do?"

She wrung her hands in agony, and tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Be calm. I only fear this—I am not certain."

The artful scoundrel did not wish to alarm her beyond a certain limit, for then she might appeal to others for aid; he wanted to keep her in his own hands.

"And we can't go at once to Boston?"

"No; for in case I am misled by a false clew we would only be losing time. Surely you know that I am doing my best and utmost?"

The last words were uttered reproachfully.

"Oh, yes; dear, kind friend, I am not ungrateful, believe me."

She was fearful of offending her only friend by an appearance of distrust.

"I know you are not. I will find your boy and then claim my reward."

His keen eyes were fixed upon her anxious, tear-stained face, which looked like a dew-washed flower.

"Reward?" she repeated. "Oh, Mr. Stevens, if I am ever in a position to reward you—you will find that I am not ungrateful."

The emphasis she laid on the pronoun caused the gambler's heart to swell with joy. He fancied that it meant a special regard for him. Cunning and deep though he was he had no knowledge that could assist him to read Elna's thoughts. He was totally ignorant of all the workings of the pure mind of an innocent woman.

Any one who restored her child would have the same claim upon her. A negro—an outcast—any one who placed Dolf safe and sound in her arms, would receive the same grateful regard as she bestowed upon the man she supposed to be her husband's friend.

He was not worthy to know her heart, and as the wish is father to the thought, he deceived himself and believed that she had learned to love him.

"Thank you, Elna," he said, with an expression Elna did not understand on his face, and a tone of deep feeling in his voice. "When the time comes I will remind you of your promise."

She gazed at him in surprise; he called her by name and he seemed strangely agitated; but she was only puzzled by his manner; it awakened no suspicions in her untutored, unworldly heart.

"You say you will reward me," he resumed more lightly, for he dreaded above all things to alarm her.

"Yes, though I cannot tell how. Until Randolph returns, I am not in a position to reward any one."

She had a vague idea that he might be poor, though he did not appear so, and she knew the bitter sting of poverty but too well.

"I will not ask Randolph for the reward I want," he returned, taking her soft little hand in his as he rose to leave her. "I'll ask you and you will give it to me—will you not?"

She raised her blue, childlike eyes to his, and answered earnestly:

"I will."

"Thank you! Good-by. You shall have news in a day or two."

He hastened from her presence, his eyes dazzled by the blood which rushed madly to his brain. Had he remained another moment he must have betrayed himself even to Elna's innocent eyes.

"I'll end this business as soon as I can with safety," he averred to himself, as he hurried along, heedlessly jostling through the crowded streets.

So strange was his appearance that many persons turned and gazed after him.

One man seemed particularly struck by his expression of countenance. He stood up and watched Stanard out of sight.

"Well!" he remarked, emphatically, "I never saw but one person with that look on his face, and he was on his way to commit a murder. I'd give something to know who that fellow is, and where he is going."

He slowly proceeded on his way home. The man who uttered the words was Knowles, the detective.

How close we sometimes are to the object of our hopes, and that for which we are striving our utmost, only to find that we are foiled—missing by a hairbreadth our chances of success.

In order to elude Ubaldina's detective, Stanard wore a beard when he visited Elna, so Knowles failed to recognize him.

CHAPTER XV.

HELP FROM AN UNEXPECTED QUARTER.

MABEL NELSON was, like most quiet women, much smarter than people gave her credit for. Like Borrowdale and the butler, she had ob-

served the marks on Randolph Church's neck, and, like them, she believed his death had not been due to heart disease.

She was terribly troubled by the thought, for she dared not express her opinion openly.

Mrs. Church must, on no account, be agitated, and the humble cousin was well aware that in her more fortunate relative, Miss Church, she had no friend.

She buried her belief, therefore, in her own breast. She had loved her cousin Randolph intensely; of all the family he alone had been uniformly kind to her and thoughtful of her comfort, and hers was a very grateful nature.

Mabel Nelson was of an extremely high-principled character, and anything like deception was, in her opinion, little else but criminal. For this reason she felt very unhappy. She had a secret locked away in her breast which she felt she ought not to reveal, and yet, if justice was to be done it must be told!

She believed that she alone was aware of Randolph Church's marriage—a knowledge she had acquired in rather a strange manner.

Her cousin often wore a loose morning-jacket of dark-blue plush. It was a garment that he had worn for years, and it had required some repairing.

He happened to mention this fact to Mabel, who gladly offered to give it her attention.

Randolph thanked her, and sent the coat to her room. In turning it over to mend the torn place, a portrait had fallen from one of the pockets.

The picture was a large photograph of a lady with a child in her arms.

Mabel felt rather surprised that her cousin carried about what she supposed to be the portrait of a friend, but she placed the imperial in her work-basket, and when she returned the coat, handed Randolph the picture.

"Where did you get that?" he asked sharply, as he took it from her hand.

"It fell out of your pocket when I turned the coat over," said Mabel, feeling confused, for Randolph was evidently displeased.

"How careless of me," he answered. "It is lucky it was you who found it. Have you shown it to any one?"

"No."

"Mabel, say nothing about it till I give you permission. That is my wife—and that is my boy."

"You are married?" Mabel gasped in astonishment.

"Yes, and my wife is a perfect little darling, but she is poor and humble. Don't betray me, there is a good soul. It would kill my mother if she knew."

Mabel thought that this was very wrong but did not venture to say so. Her opinion was not valued very highly, so she kept it to herself.

Soon after this incident Randolph's sudden death took place.

After the excitement was over and the household had resumed its old even tenor, the conscientious woman began to feel the burden of her dead cousin's secret press heavily upon her.

It was evident to her as well as to all the others that Mrs. Church would soon follow her son. Then his wife and child ought to take their proper places in the mansion, whose inmates as yet were unaware of their very existence.

Which way did her duty lie? She knew not. Randolph had told her nothing save the mere fact that he was married and the father of a son.

Where were his wife and child? She could not tell.

Oello had taken charge of the dead man's rooms and she had never mentioned the picture. Neither had she spoken of any letters or papers relating to a marriage.

No wonder Mabel felt puzzled how to act. She only possessed enough knowledge to bewilder her, not to guide her. She dreaded Mrs. Church's anger too much to confide the story to her, and she trembled for the consequences, for she well knew Mrs. Church was a dying woman.

Twenty times she had been on the point of confiding the secret to Miss Church, but the cold, haughty manner of the Creole repelled her.

She knew not what to do or where to turn for advice.

Before Mrs. Church breathed her last, Mabel felt that Randolph's mother ought to know the truth.

After sleepless nights and anxious days, Mabel at length decided upon her course of action. She would consult the family lawyer.

With this intention she dressed herself one day and left the house.

Mr. Stamford was a man of much dignity and little intelligence; his position was inherited from his father, who had been a man of master intellect and sound sense. As such men rarely leave creditable sons behind them, it is a dispensation of providence that the fortunes of their sons are generally made and their futures assured, for they lack capacity to make them good themselves.

Mr. Stamford had a very pompous manner; he had acquired the reputation, among people

who were not sharp enough to see through him, of possessing great wisdom. He was slow in giving his opinion for the reason that it is hard to express what one hasn't got.

To this gentleman Mabel went in her desperate need of a counselor.

Mr. Stamford was at home and received Miss Nelson in the library.

He received her with a manner pleasingly combined of patronage of the poor relation, blended with politeness due to the representative of a rich and important family.

Mabel timidly told her story.

Mr. Stamford opened his well-fed eyes in incredulous amazement. Like all stupid people, he was averse to believing that any person, place or thing, was at all different from what he had always supposed it to be. He detested changes and innovations; they disarranged his very small stock of ideas and forced him to form new opinions.

"Why, you amaze me, Miss Nelson!" he gasped, staring stupidly before him like a baffled ox.

"Yes, I was very much surprised myself, and the responsibility seemed so great that I thought I was justified in seeking your advice."

"Quite right—perfectly right," assented the wise man, pleased with this homage.

"What shall I do now, sir?"

Mr. Stamford was nonplused, but he possessed sufficient of the acumen of his profession to conceal the fact.

"Well, my dear lady, I advise you to wait. We must investigate this claim and wait."

"But no one has advanced any claim, and Mrs. Church is dying!" said Mabel, with a fear of the man's incapacity to advise her faintly dawning in her mind.

"But you can't rush matters, my good lady. You have only the merest shred of evidence, and all we can do is to wait—"

"Wait for what?" asked Mabel, in bewilderment.

"Why, this woman will come forward if she has any claim," explained Mr. Stamford, impatiently.

"You cannot tell. Randolph may have married under an assumed name."

Such a thought would never have entered Mr. Stamford's head, but he grasped it and adopted it as his own.

"Exactly, and therefore I say—wait."

"But Mrs. Church may die and never know that she has a grandson."

"Well, if she does not, I cannot see that the deprivation will have any injurious effect."

"But the injustice! Miss Church expects to inherit everything, and it is shameful that Randolph's wife and child are perhaps in poverty."

"Miss Church is only one of Mrs. Church's heirs-at-law."

"I know, but I think my aunt will most likely leave the bulk of her fortune to my cousin, for she does not like me."

"Nonsense, my good lady! You are her sister's daughter, while Miss Church is only her husband's niece."

"Nevertheless she dislikes me," persisted Mabel, with a sigh.

It pained her to be disliked.

"I think you are mistaken."

"No, I am not, sir, but I need not take up any more of your time."

She bade the lawyer farewell, with a haunting fear that he was a pompous fool in her mind—the mere thought seeming like sacrilege.

"He'll do nothing," she decided in her despair, "and my aunt will die and never know."

That night she scarcely slept. She was tortured by the thought that Randolph Church's wife and child were suffering.

Her helplessness made her feel half-distracted.

What was she to do?

Toward morning she slept and dreamed, and strange to say she dreamed of Borrowdale—dreamed that he found his master's wife and child in great distress.

"The very thing," she said, on awakening in the morning.

"Borrowdale may know something of Randolph's marriage. I'll ask him."

It was a somewhat difficult matter to arrange an interview with Borrowdale, for their talk must necessarily be private.

Chance favored her, however, and she succeeded in requesting the valet to meet her in Mrs. Flutter's parlor.

The housekeeper was occupied, and they would be alone for at least half an hour.

Mabel was seated in Mrs. Flutter's easy-chair when Borrowdale entered the room. He wore a grave face, and had he not been such a well-bred servant, would have allowed the astonishment he felt, by being requested to meet Mabel, to appear.

"You wished to see me, Miss Nelson?" he said, respectfully, after closing the door.

"Yes, Borrowdale. I am very much troubled by something which I became aware of accidentally shortly before Mr. Church's death."

"Yes, miss."

"Borrowdale, you know that Mr. Church's fortune would be his son's, if he had one?"

"Certainly, miss."

Borrowdale had great command over his face, otherwise he would have suffered his thoughts to find expression then, and his thought was—"Miss Mabel has gone mad."

"Well, Borrowdale, don't you think it is very wrong for us to allow Mrs. Church to leave her money and her son's money to Miss Church, when he left a wife and child?"

Mabel was talking this way with a purpose. She wished to awaken Borrowdale's conscience, and she felt sure the valet knew all about his master's marriage.

"A wife and child, miss?"

The utter helplessness and bewilderment of the valet were so apparent that Mabel saw that she had been mistaken. The man was not in his master's confidence.

"Excuse me for speaking in that way," she went on, at once. "I fancied you knew Mr. Church was married."

"Upon my honor, I did not," responded the valet, promptly. "But, Miss Nelson, I think you are mistaken. It cannot be possible that he was."

"He told me so himself," answered Mabel, firmly.

Borrowdale knit his brows; he seemed endeavoring to think something out.

"Well, Miss Nelson, you amaze me," he said, slowly; "but where are the wife and child?"

"That's what I cannot tell."

"If he was married I should think his wife would come here to inquire for him, and to claim her rights."

"But Mr. Church's marriage was a secret one, and he may, out of consideration for his mother, have married under an assumed name."

"It is possible," assented Borrowdale, thoughtfully; "but if that is the case, Miss Mabel, what are we to do?"

Mabel did not reply, for she was in the position of one who sought advice; she did not offer it.

"The detective would say this threw a new light on the subject."

The valet had unwittingly thought aloud.

"What detective?" asked Mabel, in amazement.

"Why, miss, you know there was one here the day Mr. Church's body was found."

"Borrowdale, what is your idea about Mr. Church's death?"

Mabel's face was very pale and grave, and her tone was very impressive.

Borrowdale rubbed his chin; he had lived in high-toned families all his life, and he had learned that the first duty of a well-trained servant is to repress himself—to be dumb, deaf and blind.

"Why, miss," said he, evasively, "you know the coroner said he died of heart-disease; it is in the family."

"I know it is; my mother died of it; but Mr. Church was such a young, healthy man."

Borrowdale looked at Miss Nelson for fully a minute. He was at a loss to know how he should act. The detective had virtually abandoned the case. He had almost come around to the coroner's opinion, but Borrowdale and the butler had not.

The valet was helpless. Knowles, in his capacity of Sarah Brown, had accomplished very little. He had frightened Oello—that was all, and that proved nothing.

Miss Nelson had always been such a nonentity in the house that it seemed strange to appeal to her for advice or assistance, but Borrowdale had little choice in the matter. She was already aware of some important secrets; in fact, she knew more than he did, for she knew that Randolph had left a wife and child. She was a good woman, and must be, Borrowdale reflected, a very sensible one, to hold her tongue so long.

"Knowles has left me in the lurch," he said to himself. "I'll make a clean breast of the whole business to Miss Nelson."

He did so. He told her of his own and the butler's suspicions—of the detective's presence in the house and vain attempt to extort some evidence from the Indian woman's guilty fears. Mabel listened with a very pale face and firmly-closed lips. She expressed neither surprise nor anger when the valet spoke of the liberty he had taken in thus introducing a detective into the house.

"I did it on my own responsibility, Miss Mabel," he said, in conclusion, "for I could not rest till I found out whether my master met with foul play or not. I loved him."

"You did right, Borrowdale. I am glad you feel as I do on the subject, for I have always believed my cousin was murdered. We will work together to clear up the mystery, for I can speak Spanish. I have never used it since I came here. Neither Miss Church nor the nurse know that I understand it. Send for your detective and I will assist him. I, too, loved my cousin, and please God we may yet learn the terrible secret of that death in the pavilion."

CHAPTER XVI.

A DASTARDLY CRIME.

WHEN Knowles met Ernest Stanard hastening away from Elna's desolate home, he knew that there was murder in his face. Twilight was fall-

ing, and the gambler was disguised by a long beard, otherwise the detective would have recognized him.

As it was, he suffered the man with the terrible expression on his face to pass on, unmolested. Away he strode, hustling rudely by the people who thronged the streets until he reached a somewhat shabby-looking dwelling on a quiet side street.

He opened the door with a latch-key and ascended a flight of stairs. The halls were dark, shabby, and a strong perfume of corned-beef and cabbage filled the house.

He unlocked the door of a large room on the first floor and lit the gas. He then locked and bolted the door and threw himself into a large easy-chair near the fireless grate.

He had not removed his overcoat, but he threw aside his hat and the false beard which he wore to evade the vigilance of Sandy Martin. His brow was knit, his dark face very pale, and a murderous gleam shone from his black eyes.

"I must rid myself of Uba," he muttered, savagely. "She has tormented me long enough. She has to go, and she must go at once. That fool she has hired to dog my footsteps may do some mischief; if he does it will be by accident, but I cannot afford to run any risks. She must go—but how?"

He threw off his coat and walked the floor; a fever was raging in his veins though the room was cold, and his face was damp and livid.

Remorseless murderer and villain though he was, he could not escape the sting of conscience. He had been brought up without the semblance of religious training, for his mother was an ignorant savage; still the instinct God has given to the lowest natures was in him; he knew right from wrong, and he knew he was committing a cowardly and dastardly crime when he took the life of the woman who loved him.

"She is selfish and coarse," he said, as if in extenuation of his treacherous crime. "She is like a tiger in her love. She is not like a woman. She must die!"

He started at the sound of the word. Pausing in his hurried stride he threw himself once more into the shabby arm-chair beside the cold and cheerless hearth.

"How shall I rid myself of her?" he muttered. "Poison may be detected. She is strong. Could I persuade people that she committed suicide? That is it. She is violent. I'll provoke her—it is easily done. She'll rave and I'll leave her alone. It can be done! Why didn't I think of that before?"

He rose, smoothed his disordered hair and buttoned up his coat, then hastened from the house. The first drug-store he came to he entered. A tired-looking lad stood behind the counter.

"Give me twenty-five cents' worth of laudanum," he said, coolly.

"I cannot, unless you have a prescription," replied the boy.

"I am a doctor—hand me some paper, and I'll write one."

He hastily scribbled the necessary words, and handed the prescription to the boy, who ran his eye over it and then placed it carefully on the file and turned away to get the drug.

When his back was toward Stanard, the gambler easily secured the paper which he thrust into his pocket.

Paying for the opiate, Stanard left the store. At the door he jostled against a man who stared at him fixedly. The man was Sandy Martin!

An oath almost escaped the murderer's lips.

Sandy crossed the street and followed Stanard, who took a car at the corner.

Of course Sandy was a passenger on the same car.

He experienced no trouble with the man he was piping, for the gambler went straight home.

It was just nine o'clock as the bad husband entered his wife's parlor. Uba sat by the fire, with a book on her knee. She was not reading, however.

"Well, Uba, I'm home early, like the model husband," Ernest with a sneer saluted her.

"So I see," she answered, coldly. "To what am I indebted for the honor of your company at this unusual hour?"

"The wish—I may say, irresistible longing—to gaze upon your beautiful face," Stanard answered, with an ugly smile on his lips, a mocking light in his eyes.

"Indeed! I am extremely flattered!"

Her dark cheeks glowed with their usual dull flush of anger.

"Yes. When a man is lucky enough to possess such a generous, lovely and attractive wife, he ought to show his appreciation of the fact."

He spoke with a lazy drawl, and lit a cigar.

"Did you come here to insult me?" asked Ubaldina, quickly.

Her fiery blood was already up.

"Insult you! How can you imagine such an absurd thing?"

His contempt was now open and honest, at least.

"Some new plot has evidently been set afloat by your family," said the woman, quietly. She was astonished, as well as indignant.

"Possibly. My family are always plotting—my wife, for instance."

"No. I scorn your treacherous ways."

"Do you, indeed? Is that why you employ a man to dog my footsteps?"

She turned pale, and her lips trembled as she faltered:

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say?"

He started up with a savage suddenness.

"It is a fine thing for me to live this life," he went on, glaring at the unfortunate woman who sat helplessly gazing at him. "I have a wife who thrust herself upon me—a woman I married for her money alone—a woman I hate, despise, loathe! And this very woman keeps me like a beggar. Her sole good quality is her fortune, and I never handle one cent of it."

Ubalina never opened her lips. She sat gazing at him in perfect silence. She was literally stricken dumb. At last he displayed his true colors, so carefully hidden during his married life.

"Not only am I kept like a beggar," he resumed, after pausing for an answer and getting none, "but my very footsteps are dogged. This woman is so well aware of her own deficiencies that she knows it is impossible for any man to love her, and she is jealous—jealous! Ha! ha!"

Still she moved not—and no word passed her white lips.

"But I am tired of it all. I'll leave to-night—leave you free to enter society as a beauty and an heiress. You will no doubt create a decided sensation."

"Yes, you have thrown off the mask at last," said Uba, slowly, speaking in a low, calm tone, that told how deep was her resentment.

"I have—I'm tired of the farce."

"Very well: I'm glad of it. You are welcome to go just as soon as you please."

"I shall avail myself of your kind permission."

"Do so without delay. You shall soon be joined by your mother and sister, and the solace of their society will doubtless console you for your disappointment in the loss of my fortune."

"I have nothing to do with them."

"Indeed? I thought you would all be happier together. The Chunchos squaw ought to be surrounded by her interesting family."

Stanard's face flushed, and his eyes sparkled; the tables were turned on him; he was now growing angry.

"You need not flatter yourself that you can annoy me by your taunts," he said, harshly. "I care nothing for your opinion. Pack my clothes and I shall go."

"Pack them yourself. I have not yet fallen low enough to wait upon the base-born son of my former slave."

He sprung at her with his clinched hand upraised to strike her. She did not flinch. She looked in his face with a mocking laugh.

"You devil!" he shouted, forgetting all his plans, "I have a mind to blow your brains out!"

"Do so, if you dare!" she replied, coolly.

Restraining himself by a violent effort, he turned away.

"Coward!" cried Ubalina, "you dare not strike me!"

Stanard did not reply; he could no longer trust himself, so hastened from the room.

"So he has at last shown his claws," murmured the woman, sinking into a chair. "Ah! now I see my folly! What a blind, besotted fool I have been! Alas! it is too late to undo the past!"

No words can picture her feelings; her savage nature was thoroughly aroused. The fierce tide of her jealous anger drowned for the time her love for her unworthy husband. Her love seemed turned to hatred. She felt so maddened by his bitter taunts and insults that she fancied she could kill him.

"I'll expose them to Mrs. Church as soon as it is day," she added, savagely. "Not one hour longer shall they flaunt in my home while I linger in this low place. No, they have at last come to the end of my patience."

While she thus sat, trembling with passion, and goaded to madness by the recollections of her own folly, a cry from little Dolf aroused her.

The child's cot stood in a small apartment which Ubalina used as a dressing-room.

She rose and took him up, soothing him to rest upon her bosom. As she bowed her head over the child, tears sprung from her eyes and fell upon his face.

Dolf started and opened his eyes.

"Why are you crying?" he asked, patting her cheek with his rosy, dimpled hand; "are you sorry?"

"Yes, Dolf," with a sob.

She loved the child, and the sight of his innocent face softened her.

"Why are you sorry?"

"Never mind, dear."

To quiet the child she lay down on her bed, placing him near her. She turned the gas down very low before she lay down, but did not intend to sleep. Greatly excited though she was, how-

ever, a drowsy feeling came over her; she had been so anxious about her husband, now that she knew the worst she felt relieved. Anything is easier to bear than suspense. While she doubted she was tortured; now that she was but too certain of the worst she grew calmer.

She slept and heard not a soft footstep in her room. The door was unlocked, for she never knew what hour her husband might return. He had stolen back, and, unobserved, he entered the room.

A quick glance revealed everything in the room to the murderer. His wife lay upon the bed, little Dolf resting in her arms. He drew a handkerchief from his pocket, and a large vial. He softly poured a portion of the contents of the vial upon a sponge which he took from the dressing-table; drawing near he held the sponge, inclosed in a sheet of stout paper folded in the shape of a funnel, to his wife's face. She struggled faintly, while the room became filled with the overpowering odor of ether. With one hand upon her chest he kept her quiet, while with the other he continued to apply the sponge to her nostrils and mouth. He gazed anxiously at little Dolf, meanwhile, for he feared the fumes of the ether might injure the child. Soon Ubalina's struggles ceased, and she lay perfectly quiet. Stanard then tied the handkerchief over the sponge, fastened it behind his victim's head. She was perfectly helpless and unconscious, making neither sound nor movement. A cruel smile curled the gambler's lips as he gazed on the face of his wife.

He raised little Dolf from her arms and carried him in to his own bed. Then he returned and turned up the gas. He had locked the door when he first entered the room, and he now seated himself at a small writing-table. He placed a sheet of paper before him beside an old letter, which he took from a drawer. After studying the letter for some time he began to write. His task was soon completed, and he read what he had written with the utmost satisfaction.

"That will do," he said softly to himself.

He tore up the old letter which he had been consulting so carefully, and thrust the pieces in the fire which still burned in the grate. He then approached the bed, and took up his wife's hand; it felt as heavy as lead, and fell lifelessly when he released it. He removed the sponge and handkerchief from her face.

"Easily done," he muttered, in a tone of satisfaction.

The sponge and handkerchief were both placed on the fire, and quick flames sprung up and consumed them. Stanard then produced the bottle of laudanum he had purchased some hours before. He forced his wife's teeth apart, and poured some of the drug down her throat; then he spilled a portion of it upon her dress, the pillows and counterpane. This done, he parted the stiff fingers of her right hand, and placed the bottle in her grasp. He softly opened the windows, top and bottom, in order to rid the room of the odor of ether which lingered there. After waiting for about an hour he closed them and left the room. Pausing in the hall, he produced a small instrument with which he caught the key through the keyhole and locked the door from the outside. He then left the house.

Two o'clock was striking as he did so. Near the corner of Broadway he met a man. He recognized him in a moment.

"Curse that fellow!" he said, below his breath; "he may yet prove a thorn in my side. I'll try what I can do with him!"

Stepping up to Sandy, he asked him politely for a cigar-light.

"I don't smoke," replied Martin.

"Don't you? Well, never mind. Come into the saloon over the way; I want to have a little talk with you."

The two men were soon seated, with two glasses of beer before them.

"Now," said Stanard, coolly, as he struck a match and lit his cigar, "I want you to tell me how much my wife pays you to follow me about?"

Sandy gasped and turned pale. Stanard laughed heartily!

"Did you imagine that I don't know?" he asked, enjoying the poor little man's confusion.

"I really—I—"

"There, you need not worry; it is not the first time, by a good many."

"Is that so?" asked Sandy, the color gradually coming back to his face.

"Yes, my wife has a monomania. She is so jealous that she is really a lunatic."

"She is jealous, and I do not at all wonder," returned Sandy, warmly.

Stanard laughed.

"You think I am a gay boy, eh?"

Sandy felt disposed to say that he might perhaps apply a stronger term than that of "black-guard."

"Well," said the gambler, watching a ring of smoke float away above his head, "I am not very steady, that is a fact, but she drove me to being wild by her constant nagging."

Sandy looked, as he felt, incredulous.

"It is a fact," persisted Stanard, "though you look as if you didn't believe it."

"No amount of nagging could make me act as you do," declared the little man stoutly.

"No, I guess not; you don't look like one of the boys," replied the gambler, with a laugh.

"I have no desire to look like them. Your wife is a true lady."

"She is a perfect devil when she is jealous, and she is very rarely anything else."

Sandy knew this was true, so he said nothing.

"Now," resumed Stanard, "do you know what I want you to do?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I want you to meet me at my house to-morrow morning. I've just had a terrible scene with my wife, and I intend to sleep at the Grand Central Hotel. I'll go around about nine o'clock and wish you to meet me there."

"Yes, sir."

"And we will have a little talk with Mrs. Stanard. I want you to tell her it is all nonsense, this dogging me; that I don't do anything out of the way, and all that. I'll give you five hundred dollars if you quiet her down."

"I won't tell lies for five thousand dollars!" averred Sandy, stoutly.

"No, I don't want you to. Just tell her I ain't worse than other fellows—that's the truth. Here's fifty down, and if you can get me out of this row, I'll give you the rest."

Fifty dollars was a temptation to poor Sandy Martin.

"I won't tell lies, mind," he said, eying the bills longingly.

"No, not one; you can say very truthfully that I am no worse than plenty of others, can't you?"

Sandy pondered. He had been so thoroughly enlightened since he adopted his present profession that he certainly could say Stanard was no worse than others.

"Yes," he assented, doubtfully, with a fond glance at the bills which lay on the table.

"Well, that's all I want you to say."

"I'll say that; but, all the same, I am sorry for your wife. She loves you ten thousand times better than you deserve."

Depraved though he was, a thrill of remorse shot through the black heart of the gambler. He gave a gasp. Had it been in his power at that moment, he might have undone his dark night's work.

The feeling lasted but a moment.

"I believe she does," he replied, in a low tone.

"What is the matter?" asked Sandy. "You are as white as if you had seen a ghost."

"I don't feel well. Waiter, a glass of brandy!"

He swallowed it and then rose.

"Will you take anything more? All right. You will meet me to-morrow. Good-night."

He hastily left the saloon, and Sandy gathered up the bills and stowed them away in his pocket-book, that had been sadly empty and lonesome.

"What a terrible look came over that man's face!" thought the little detective, as he wended his way home. "With all his money, I would not change places with him to-night. He looks like the picture of Cain in Gustave Dore's Bible."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PLACE OF ESPIAL.

THE fresh light cast upon the case which so baffled Knowles was the startling information imparted by Borrowdale, during a visit he paid the detective immediately after his interview with Mabel Nelson.

That information was, of course, on the subject of Randolph Church's secret marriage.

"Married secretly, by Jove!"

Knowles did not often betray signs of surprise, but he forgot his professional calm for once, and betrayed them when he heard this news.

"Yes, there seems to be no doubt upon the subject, though he was the last man in the world I'd suspect of such an action."

"Hum! You can't always tell. A wife and child! Well, I might as well look for a needle in a hay-stack, as look for a wife and child in New York, for, of course, as the marriage was a secret one, he married under a false name."

"That is what Miss Nelson says. She has no mere idea than the dead what to do, but she understands Spanish."

"She does? That's good. Well, I'll come back with renewed vigor. I'll work that haunted room for all it is worth."

"But Mrs. Flutter may not take you back."

"Tell her I only want to stay a few days—that I am going back to England."

"All right. When will you come?"

"No time like the present. I'll come to-night."

So it was arranged. Sarah reappeared, much to Anette's disgust. Mrs. Flutter saw no harm in Borrowdale's niece staying a few days, and Mrs. Church was quite gracious, remembering the loss and recovery of her diamond pin.

That night about half-past ten Mabel Nelson was in her own room preparing to enact the role of amateur detective. She removed all her garments that were given to rustling. She then put on a pair of shoes composed entirely of felt soles, thus to walk about noiselessly. She then clothed herself from head to foot in a long soft cloak, made with sleeves; it fitted her closely.

In this garment she occupied not one-third of the space required in her ordinary dress.

When all was ready she extinguished the gas in her room and cautiously opened the door.

"Here!" whispered Sarah Brown, who stood outside, waiting.

The gas in the corridor had been turned down very low, and the two hurried on till they reached the room next to that occupied by Miss Church.

This room they entered hastily. It was the room where Mrs. Flutter kept her linen, extra bedding, and all such things.

Knowles opened the door with a key from his bunch, pushed Mabel in, and followed her; then closed and locked the door.

"Be very quiet," he whispered, and lit the gas, but turned it down low.

"Well, we are in, safe enough. Borrowdale says the old lady has slept here every night since I fixed the ghost for her."

"But I shall not be able to hear one word they say in Miss Church's room," demurred Mabel, in a tone of disappointment.

"Hold on, miss. Come here!"

He led the way to a large press or closet in the corner. With another key he opened its door. This closet was full of bed and table linen, arranged on shelves.

"Now, miss, you'll think you are at sea. Hold on till I clear this shelf."

In the twinkling of an eye Knowles had the contents of the second shelf on the floor.

A space of about four feet in width and three in depth was disclosed.

"Can you get in there?"

Mabel looked dismayed.

"I can try," she said, doubtfully.

"Oh, you can do it, miss, and then you can not only hear what they say, but see them."

Mabel made the attempt, and found it easier to climb upon the shelf than she had anticipated.

"Here," whispered Knowles, handing her a piece of black crape; "throw that over your head or they will see your eyes shine when you peep through."

At the back of this closet, which was papered, Mabel found that the detective had cleverly arranged not only an opening to hear through, but a place from which the whole of Miss Church's apartment was plainly visible. So, unknown to herself, the counterfeit heiress was living under the very eye of a keen observer.

This work was so skillfully done that Mrs. Flutter might have gone to her closet and never observed any change in its appearance.

By a process known to himself the detective had loosened the wall-paper over about one square foot of the wall; the plaster had then been taken out and the laths cut away, and the paper so readjusted with pins that a visit from Mrs. Flutter would have failed to discover the eye-hole.

Then came the lath and plaster of Miss Church's room, which Knowles had also removed one day while the young lady and her Indian nurse were both out for several hours. The walls were almost completely covered with paintings, and costly china plaques—some of them being exquisite enameled of Limoges of the XVth century. Without altering their position sufficiently to attract attention, the detective had so arranged them that several large holes remained in the walls unnoticed. This was his place of espial; it was cleverly contrived, but had proven thus far unavailing, since he could not understand one word that had been spoken, and Oello's fright really signified nothing in the way of evidence.

At length Knowles felt that he would be rewarded for all his trouble. Mabel, the unobtrusive poor relation, was to prove the only one who could be of the slightest service. Through her alone could he learn the dread secret of the sudden death in the pavilion.

Since Knowles had learned of Randolph Church's secret marriage he no longer doubted that his death was not by the visitation of God, but by the foul hand of a treacherous assassin. Here was the looked-for motive for the murder.

He had said—"There never was a murder without a motive." Now that the motive was ascertained, it would be a comparatively easy matter to find the murderer.

Randolph Church had been the possessor of a large fortune. He had left a son who was the legal heir to his wealth. Who was the most interested in this fact? Not his mother, for she was a dying woman, whose own ample fortune prevented her from wishing for more money.

Miss Church was the next heir-at-law, providing Randolph Church's son never put forward his claim. She had also loved her cousin.

"Here," asserted Knowles, rubbing his hands, "we have not only one motive, but two. By cutting off this man's life before his marriage was a proven and acknowledged fact, this artful girl will ultimately inherit his fortune, and by murdering him, or causing him to be murdered, she was revenged upon him for slighting her love, which, by all accounts, she actually thrust upon him. The poet says—'Hell holds no fury like a woman scorned,' and I believe he is about right."

Borrowdale, to whom these remarks were addressed, fully concurred in Knowles's opinion.

"It is terrible," he said, sadly. "Poor Mr. Church! He was such a noble man! To think that he was strangled like a dog makes my blood boil, and it would never have happened if he had not built that unlucky place. I hate the sight of it. It gives me a chill when I look out of the window and see it standing there, shining in the moonlight like a great monument."

"Yes; and I am afraid the one who strangled him like a dog will never be brought to justice."

Mabel Nelson had described as well as she could the pictured faces of her cousin's wife and child. All she could say, however, was that they seemed fair; the lady's face was pretty and innocent, she said, and the baby's photograph looked pretty much like that of any other healthy baby.

This was all, and little enough. Now came the attempt to learn more from the superstitious terrors of the Indian nurse.

Mabel sat in a cramped attitude for three long hours in her hiding-place ere her patience was rewarded. Knowles, who remained in the room, occasionally encouraging her by a whisper.

At length footsteps were heard. Oello entered her daughter's room and lit the gas. Mabel peeped through the opening and saw the Indian throw open a wardrobe and take out a long silk dressing-gown of pale-salmon color, heavily embroidered in parti-colored tints, for the savage instincts of the false heiress occasionally asserted themselves in a love of gaudy hues. Oello laid the robe over the back of an easy-chair, and placed a pair of pink satin slippers before it.

She then arranged brushes, combs, etc., and just as she finished her task the young lady entered.

Mabel's eyes and ears were opened wide for what was to come, while Knowles stood by, listening attentively, though of course he could neither see nor hear.

Miss Church threw herself into the easy-chair, and began to turn over the leaves of a book, while her mother took down the heavy braids and coils of her shining black hair.

No word was spoken for some time, and Mabel felt anxious and disappointed.

What if nothing came of all her trouble? She felt terribly cramped and fatigued by her uncomfortable position. She could not move, and the darkness and close smell of the closet caused her to feel so faint and ill that she almost regretted that she had exposed herself to needless discomfort and longed for release from her perch, when Oello's voice aroused her.

"I saw Ernest this afternoon," said she, as she doffed brushed out the long tresses which flowed over the back of the chair to the carpet.

"Yes?"

The girl's tone was indifferent and careless.

"Yes, she is passionately fond of the child, already."

"Oh!"

"Oh! you need not be so scornful, Sura. I do not despise Uba; I dread her too much."

"You have grown cowardly," said Sura, sneeringly.

"No, I have not; but this is not Peru; we have run fearful risks, and we have accomplished nothing."

"Pshaw! Am I not Miss Church, the heiress?—the favorite niece of the old woman who cannot live long?"

"Yes; but—"

"Oello, you grow tiresome! Your fears exaggerate every danger! What do you dread? Ernest? He has made himself a criminal, and is powerless. Uba? I defy her! I am here in this house! Let her put me out, if she can!"

"I fear Ernest. He is tired to death of Ubalina, and I believe has fallen in love with the child's mother."

"What?"

Sura started so violently, and uttered the word so sharply that Mabel started also. She shook the weakened portion of the wall against which her head rested. A loud clatter followed and a crash. One of the exquisite Limoges enameled had been shaken from the wall and smashed to atoms!

"Good heavens, what is that?" cried Oello and Sura together, as they started forward. Mabel saw them coming and gave herself up as lost.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SUICIDE.

SANDY MARTIN'S conscience prevented him from sleeping the night after his interview with the gambler. He wished he had not accepted the fifty dollars, yet he consoled himself with the reflection that he had absolutely refused to utter any false statements or had disguised his opinion of Mr. Ernest Stanard, which was certainly not a high one.

He omitted to mention to his better-three-quarters that he had received the money, for he wished to leave himself a loophole of escape in case he could not satisfy his client

that her husband was no worse than the majority of men.

"He is worse—a great deal worse," said Sandy, as he buttoned up his shabby overcoat and started out to keep his appointment.

"I'll not say much for him, and the little I shall say will be to ease the poor woman's mind. She can't make him any better by watching him, and I am afraid she loves him too well to leave him."

As Sandy thus soliloquized he walked rapidly toward the place where he expected to meet Stanard. As he drew near the house a singular feeling came over him. The morning was bright and beautiful, and the streets were full of busy, pleasant-looking people, but Sandy felt as if he were walking in the gloomy shade of a country churchyard.

"I'm nervous, that's a fact," said he to himself. "This life don't suit me. I'll have to give it up. The late hours don't agree with me."

He rung the bell at the door. An untidy girl, with her Montagues hidden in the obscurity of papers and glue, opened the door.

"Can I see Mr. Stanard?"

"I don't know; I guess he ain't up."

"He told me to call here at nine."

Sandy looked at his watch. It just wanted one minute and a half of the appointed time.

"Well, I'll knock at the door and see. You can wait."

Sandy availed himself of the privilege and seated himself in a chair in the hall.

The girl knocked loud and long, then returned to Sandy.

"I told you they weren't up," she said, snappishly.

As she spoke the front door was opened by a latch-key and Ernest Stanard appeared.

"Oh! good-morning!" saluted the gambler, pleasantly. His face was very pale, but he was elaborately dressed and seemed in good spirits. "I am glad you are here on time, for I have to go to Washington this afternoon," he added.

"I am afraid we shall not have the pleasure of seeing your wife at present," remarked Sandy; "this young lady says she is not up yet."

"Oh, I'll call her. Come on!"

Stanard led the way to the door and tapped with his cane.

"Uba!" he called, then waited a few moments. "It is strange she does not answer; she is a light sleeper."

He tried the door, but it was locked.

"Uba!" This time he spoke louder, and rapped more sharply, with, however, the same result.

"I can't understand this," he declared, allowing a shade of anxiety to appear on his face.

Just then came a sound from the room—little Dolf's voice in a cry of alarm.

"What's the matter?" Stanard called out. The child was evidently moving about through the room. He came to the door and tried to open it.

"Turn the key!" shouted the gambler.

"I can't!" sobbed Dolf.

"Wake mamma then."

The boy left the door and the baby voice was heard urging the woman to "dit up!"

In a moment he was back at the door. "My new mamma won't dit up," he cried.

"What's to be done?" asked Stanard, appealingly to Sandy and the servant girl who stood staring curiously on.

"Burst open the door," suggested the girl who was fond of excitement.

"But my wife may be angry if we do. She was in a bad temper last night," confessed Stanard doubtfully.

"I know she was," replied the girl, nodding her head. "I heard yezs fighting!"

Dolf was now crying at the top of his voice and beating on the door with all his might.

"I think you will have to force the door," advised Sandy. "Perhaps your wife is ill."

"I hope not," returned the gambler.

He put his shoulder to the door and in another moment it was wide open. The three persons found their way into the room together. A terrible sight met their eyes. Mrs. Stanard lay cold in death, and Dolf

stood crying in the middle of the floor in his little night-dress.

"My God!" exclaimed the gambler. "How is this?"

"She has taken laudanum," replied Sandy Martin, pointing to the bottle with its label on which grinned the death's head.

"Good heavens, this is what she always threatened!"

He struck his forehead with his hand and looked wildly about him.

Sandy Martin said nothing, but he kept his eyes fixed upon Stanard's face.

"What time did you leave her last night?" he asked.

A lie trembled upon the white lips of the murderer, but he saved himself by remembering that he had met Sandy near his own door.

"Some time near morning," he answered after a pause. "I can't remember just when."

The little man turned away; a sort of horror of this man came over him. He never suspected for one moment that he *had* murdered his wife, but he knew that he had been the cause of her death. She had poisoned herself in a frenzy of jealous rage. She had ample cause for her jealousy; so Sandy argued that the man before him had indirectly murdered her.

"Ah, this tells the story," cried Stanard in a tone of affected melancholy. He held up a letter, which he had taken from the writing-table for Sandy's inspection.

The letter was short and was addressed to

"WHOEVER FINDS MY BODY."

It read:

"I cannot live any longer the life I live. I die to-night by my own hand. I wish my body to be sent to Peru and there buried near that of my old father."

"UBALDINA STANARD."

"Mad woman!" muttered the gambler.

Sandy said nothing.

The servant girl had spread the news, and the room was soon full of people. The landlady took charge, for Stanard seemed stunned by the sudden blow. The doctor came, and police officers. They all looked wise and gave orders, and every one was turned out of the room.

Little Dolf cried pitifully, and the landlady took compassion on him and conveyed him away to some underground region where she spent the largest portion of her life.

Mr. Stanard's presence was not required, so he left the house, after giving orders for everything to be done quietly and no expense to be spared.

Sandy Martin also left, after giving his address to the coroner.

Mrs. Stanard, the jealous wife, was no more.

Her husband walked out in the bright spring sunshine—a free man.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE TOILS.

ERNEST STANARD's bad, black heart throbbed with joy as he rode up-town in an elevated train after leaving the house where lay the remains of his murdered wife.

He was going to visit Elna—to tell her that he now had certain information of her boy's whereabouts, and, if possible, to induce her to go to Boston without delay. He cursed the coroner, who had told him he must be present at the examination the following day to give his evidence as to the cause of his wife's death.

No pang of remorse touched his hard heart now. He exulted in his freedom to woo the pure girl who had suffered so much through his treacherous pretense of friendship, and who was doomed to suffer still more. He had already robbed her of her child; now he determined to tell her of her husband's death and win from her a promise that she would be his ere he would restore little Dolf to her aching heart.

"All goes well," he said in triumphant tones. "Once married to Elna I shall be all I wish—happy, wealthy, and free from Uba's terrible tongue. No one could stand her."

He felt quite justified in all he had done. Why had the unfortunate woman wearied him with her complaints? Why had she treated him so meanly?

He looked out at the blue sky and actually rejoiced that his wife was dead!

All was safe, he fancied. No danger threatened his future.

He had always hated his sister; now he could triumph over her. True, she could claim his dead wife's fortune, for she represented Ubaldina Church, but the much larger fortune of Randolph Church would be his, and the loveliest woman in the world would be his wife—a soft-voiced, sweet little woman, who would never look sullen or find fault! With her he would indeed be happy.

"All is right," he repeated joyfully, as he stepped out of the car and hastened to Elna's humble home.

He found her sitting sad and listless by the window, where her flowers, formerly so carefully tended, were dying from neglect.

"How are you, Mrs. Randolph?" he said, when admitted by Christine.

"Oh, very sad indeed. I had such fearful dreams last night," she said with quivering lips and swimming eyes.

"Ugly visions of the night which I have come to dispel," replied Stanard, holding out his hand with a smile.

"But, indeed, Mr. Stevens, you were so mixed up with my trouble in my dream that I feel doubly unhappy since I saw your face," replied Elna candidly.

The treacherous monster bit his lip.

"Really, Mrs. Randolph, it is not possible for me to feel angry with you; otherwise I should be highly indignant."

"I beg your pardon," pleaded poor Elna, thinking she was showing a want of gratitude to her kind, disinterested friend. "But listen to my dream! It was frightful. I thought I was standing on the brink of a precipice. I looked down and saw dead bodies and bones away beneath me in a dark, loathsome pit. While I gazed, spellbound with horror, I heard a voice crying: 'Mamma!' and I saw Dolf down there. I looked again, and there lay my husband's dead body. Oh! how terrible it was! Well, Dolf was waving his little hands as if to warn me, and I turned and there *you* stood, just in the act of pushing me into that frightful pit. I woke with a scream. I have felt ill ever since."

Stanard turned pale and trembled. He felt that some unseen power was warning the helpless creature before him to avoid her destroyer.

"I trust you are not silly enough to put any faith in dreams, Mrs. Randolph," he remarked, trying to speak carelessly.

"No, I know it is foolish to do so, but that dream seemed so real. I can hear Dolf's voice now, ringing in my ears."

"Well, I trust you soon may do so. Dreams go by contraries, you know, and I have brought you news of Dolf."

"Oh! Mr. Stevens!" and her sad face lit up with rapture, her blue eyes shone, and the rich geranium tint came back to her lips and cheeks.

"Yes, I told you that I had heard Dolf was in Boston. I am now certain of it."

"Oh! Thank God! But, Mr. Stevens, who could have the heart to steal my child?"

The artful gambler reflected. If he could succeed in poisoning Elna's mind against her husband, he might be more successful when he urged his suit. He knew parties in Boston who were base enough to perform any part for money, so he said.

"Your husband has enemies."

"Then they must be very wicked people," assumed the loyal little wife indignantly.

"Well, I don't know. Randolph was a handsome fellow; the ladies all liked him."

He spoke in an insinuating way, as if he knew more than he cared to say. Elna was, however, too innocent to understand him. She merely gazed at him in childlike surprise.

Finding innuendoes would not produce the desired effect, the scoundrel was forced to speak more plainly.

"I see you do not understand me. I mean this, and I would not tell you, but I must explain who stole your child, and why they did so."

He seemed to hesitate, as if loth to continue.

"Go on, tell me all," cried Elna, impatiently.

"Well, I am afraid I shall pain you; but

I fear you must eventually learn the truth. Your husband was false to you, and he was on the point of marrying another woman."

"What?" cried Elna, starting from her seat, with flashing eyes.

"It is true, unfortunately. The lady he was about to marry is the person who has robbed you of your child."

"Good heavens!"

Elna clasped her hands about her head; she feared that madness was about to seize upon her brain. All the hints and warnings spoken by Mr. Allen, the house-agent, and by Mrs. Knowles, the detective's wife, came back to her, with full force. She had despised their well-meant efforts to enlighten her, and boldly pronounced their kindly warnings falsehoods, and they were but too true.

Now she must learn the worst, and still keep a brave heart for her child's sake. She must not yield to despair.

"Go on," she ordered, calmly. "Tell me the whole infamous truth."

"There is not much to tell. The girl, who is no more worthy to be compared with you than a sunflower to a rose, was also deserted in her turn. She learned that Randolph had a wife and a child, and she stole Dolf to be revenged upon his father."

"But you said he was about to marry her," persisted Elna, in bewilderment.

"So he was, but he met another face that pleased him; he broke his promise, and the girl was wild. She had made all preparations for the marriage, and even went to church; for she was deserted at the very altar."

"Poor thing," said Elna, pityingly. "She must have suffered terribly to make her mad enough to steal my child; but she was not punishing my husband; he cares not for his child. She was torturing me, and, God is my witness, I have not injured her."

She spoke with a strange calmness that showed how powerful was the control she exercised over her lacerated heart.

"She knows that now, and she is at length willing to restore Dolf to you."

"And I must see her?"

"Yes. She lives in Boston. You may wait for a week, when I shall be at liberty to accompany you, or you can go alone."

"I shall go at once. Thank you for thinking of accompanying me; but you don't understand the feelings of a mother's heart. No one but mothers do, I think."

Poor little Elna seemed to have aged since she was forced to believe her husband had forgotten her.

One other fact Stanard wished to ascertain—that was, how much or how little Elna knew of her husband's private history. It was of the utmost importance that he should be fully posted, for a false step might prove fatal to his hopes.

"You are aware that your husband had another name besides Randolph?" he said, inquiringly.

"Yes; he told me that his mother was ill from heart disease, and that she was very proud and ambitious; he did not wish to grieve her by telling her he had married a poor girl, so I agreed to marry him secretly."

"But you know his real name?"

"I do, but I promised him I would not reveal it."

"Have you your marriage-certificate?"

"I have."

Stanard rejoiced; it was plain sailing for him now. He would experience no difficulty in proving Elna's claim on her husband's name and fortune when the proper time arrived.

"So he made you promise you would never mention his name?"

"Yes, and I shall keep my word."

"That is right. I admire an honorable woman."

"Now tell me just where I shall find my child," said Elna, eagerly.

Her feelings had been greatly overwrought, and she felt that she could not prolong the conversation.

"I will give you the address and a letter to carry to the lady."

"Thank you. Do so at once, please; I do not wish to lose one moment in searching for my child."

Stanard asked for writing materials, and penned a short letter, which he handed to Elna, who read;

"NEW YORK, April 20th.

"Miss SOPHIA BLOOM, *Lynde street, Boston, Mass.:*—
"The bearer is the lawful wife of Randolph Church. Assist her at once in the recovery of her child and tell her your story."
ERNEST STEVANS.

Elna uttered an exclamation of protest when she saw the name Church.

"Never mind," said the Lucifer. "You need not mention your name. You can still keep your promise, if you do not consider that your husband's bad conduct does not absolve you from doing so."

"Certainly not; his falsehood cannot affect me. I shall keep my word," declared Elna, firmly.

Stanard was glad, for he did not wish her name to become known yet. The time had not arrived to make it public.

"Well, it can do no harm to let this woman know. Tell no one in New York at present."

"Pardon me, Mr. Stevans, if I tell you that I must prepare for my journey at once," remarked Elna, folding up the letter and carefully consigning it to her pocket-book.

"Certainly; I would not detain you for the world. Have you funds enough for this trip?"

"Yes, thank you. I am greatly indebted to you. Believe me, I am not ungrateful."

She knew she must soon give way to her passionate emotion—to the tide of outraged love and wounded pride that swelled her heart almost to bursting, and did not wish to give way before him. Her womanly dignity forbade the thought; like a sorely wounded bird she longed to hide her pain.

"Well, I'll leave you. Cheer up, my dear Elna—allow me to call you by your own sweet name. I'll be with you in Boston as soon as possible. Trust fully in me."

With a long pressure of her hand, and a lingering look into the pure depths of her blue eyes, he left her.

Just as he walked out of the house a girl hastily entered it. She ran up the stairs to Elna's room.

"Is Mrs. Randolph in?" she inquired, when Christine appeared, for Elna was already commencing to pack.

"Yes; she is very busy."

"Oh! it is important. Mrs. Randolph, my mistress says come for a few moments."

"I can't, Bessie."

"Why, ma'am?"

"I'm going to Boston at once. Tell your mistress I'll see her when I return."

"I wish you'd come, ma'am. She has something to tell you."

"Tell her I'll come the very moment I return. I'm going to find my child."

It was Mrs. Knowles who had sent for Elna, and if she had only gone to her she would have been save untold misery.

CHAPTER XX.

SANDY MARTIN ON A NEW CASE.

MABEL gave herself up as lost, for Oello and her daughter advanced directly toward her hiding-place.

"There! that is some of your carelessness!" exclaimed Sura, angrily, as she raised the fragments of the costly enameled plaque from the carpet.

"It is not," answered her mother, indignantly.

"Yes, it is. If you had not displaced it, the last time you dusted the room, this would not have happened."

"Very well, miss. Do the dusting yourself, next time."

Fortunately the quarrel between the false Miss Church and her mother, so occupied their minds that they did not examine into the cause of the accident; otherwise Knowles's clever peep-hole would have been the cause of his destruction, so far as that case was concerned.

Mabel held her breath, and felt faint and giddy till Sura had resumed her seat, and Oello was again deftly brushing the long, silky hair.

"Oello," said the young lady, after a pause, "when Mrs. Church dies, I intend to send you back to Peru."

"What?"

"Yes, I mean it. You hamper me. You seem to have lost all courage."

"And you fancy I will submit to being cast off so, tamely? You much mistake, ungrateful girl."

The eyes of the Indian nurse took on a snake-like glitter; she looked dangerous.

"I will pay you well," went on Sura, coolly.

"Pay me! Your own mother?"

Mabel almost caused another alarm, so eagerly did she bend forward to listen.

Here was an unexpected disclosure. She was completely mystified. Had the Indian woman been Mr. Church's wife?

"Mother! How you harp on that one string! You must forget that you are my mother."

"Forget that I am your mother?"

"Yes; I intend to remain Miss Church, and I shall not allow any one, I care not who they may be, to deny my right to the name."

"So! Matters have changed with you."

Oello spoke in the low tone of excessive passion.

"They have. Ernest was a fool when he stole Uba's papers from her and intrusted them to your care."

"What do you mean?"

Sura laughed significantly.

"Do you mean to say you have stolen them?"

"Certainly I do."

"And you think you can outwit me, you viper?"

Her face was now like the face of a demon. Mabel could see it reflected in the mirror close to the reflection of that of her daughter.

Sura's thin, cat-like countenance was full of triumph, but Oello's was fiendish in its malignity.

"I have outwitted you, and Ernest also. I have all my papers proving my identity as Ubaldina Church. Ernest is in my power—you know why. You both are powerless."

Oello stood speechless, baffled and paralyzed by her daughter's audacity.

"And you imagine that I will submit to this?" she gasped.

"Yes. I know you can't help yourself."

Sura spoke mockingly, and evidently enjoyed the situation.

"Well, madam, you are very much mistaken. I shall denounce you to Mrs. Church!"

Sura laughed.

"And be thrown out of the house for your trouble. No, my dear woman, my position is assured."

Mabel grew cold all over, so terrible did Oello's face become in its livid fury.

The unseen listener to the conversation felt dazed. She had come there expecting to hear these women confess some dark deed, but she scarcely understood the tenor of their talk.

Of one thing she was certain, however: the woman who personated her cousin was an impostor. She was the daughter of the Indian woman, and not her nurse-child. Where, then, was the real Ubaldina Church?

No wonder Mabel felt thoroughly bewildered.

The conversation was resumed, and again Mabel strained eyes and ears that she might lose nothing of the disclosures.

"Ingrate!" hissed Oello, "if you dare attempt to carry out your threats I shall forget that my blood flows through your veins and murder you!"

Her face wore an expression even more terrible than her words, but Sura seemed unmoved.

"Nonsense! You are too smart to risk your neck. You go back to Peru and live in comfort. You shall have all the money you wish."

"Money! Your small soul holds no thought or wish above the filthy money you worship!"

"Well, I've always found it useful. Come, let us talk sensibly. Here you must always be a servant. I can never acknowledge you as my mother. In Peru you can live in splendor."

"Ernest was right," observed Oello, slowly; "he told me what you were."

"He did?" sneered Sura, her thin lips curling scornfully. "Well, I am not such a fool as he is. He has committed murder, and what has he gained?"

"He did it for your sake, because you were slighted."

A vivid crimson stained the sallow cheeks

of the false heiress. The words stung her, devoid of all feeling though she was.

"He was a fool to do it, but he thinks he will be paid for his work. Like myself, he loves gold."

"Well, I will leave you now, and I advise you to reflect before you take any rash steps. Beware of me! You know me!"

"Where are you going?" inquired Sura, mockingly.

"To my room," replied Oello, calmly.

"Take care. It is haunted by the spirit of Randolph Church."

"Even his spirit is more welcome to me than your society, at present."

With these words the Indian woman swept from the room.

Sura retired calmly to bed, and was soon sleeping the calm sleep of a conscienceless, selfish woman. When Mabel felt safe to move she did so very gently and cautiously. Knowles's quick ear caught the sound, and he whispered: "Is it safe for you to come out?"

"Yes."

He lit the gas and Mabel slowly crept forth from her hiding-place with cramped limbs and an aching head. She felt sadly confused, and answered the detective's inquiring glance by such a look of helpless distress that he concluded she had overestimated her knowledge of the Spanish language and had learned nothing.

"Couldn't you understand them?" he asked, in a whisper, as they replaced the pile of linen they had removed from the closet.

"Yes; wait, and I'll tell you all."

They silently passed down-stairs, and met, as they had agreed, in a small room used by the butler as a pantry. Here Borrowdale awaited them with all the patience he could muster. Mabel narrated the whole conversation from beginning to end, and the two men were as much astonished as she had been herself.

"Well," said Borrowdale, "one thing is clear: not only have they murdered Mr. Church, but they have also made away with Miss Church, and, by means of stolen papers, this woman will claim her fortune."

"Yes," replied Knowles. "Now, the only hope we have is that they are quarreling. When rogues fall out honest people get their dues, and although it is paying them a compliment to call them rogues, let us hope for fuller disclosures. Miss Nelson, I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to listen again."

"Certainly; and if I may make a suggestion—"

"By all means!" assented both Borrowdale and the detective.

"Should not some one set out to look for my cousin's wife and child, and also for the real Ubaldina Church?"

Borrowdale looked helplessly at Knowles, who rubbed his chin and shut up his eyes in a puzzled manner.

"Some one ought to do it, I know," agreed the detective, for Mabel evidently expected an answer, "but the trouble is to find out who that some one is."

"Another detective," suggested Mabel.

Every one is subject to at least one weakness, and Knowles's weakness was a jealous dislike to men of his own profession. He never "doubled up" with any one if he could possibly help it, and he hated to give away one of his cases.

"Well, miss, I would rather you did not call any other man into the case. It is a very critical one, and though I don't like to speak slightly of men of my own profession, one-half of the detectives in New York ain't worth their salt, and are a hindrance instead of a help."

"And you know of no good man in your own business?" asked the valet, in a surprised tone.

"Oh, yes," replied Knowles, looking a little vexed, "I know some good men, of course, but most of them are engaged just now. Let me think."

He reflected for a few minutes.

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "I know a little man who has not been long in the business; he is honest and very anxious for work; it will be the kind of work that will suit him. I'll see him this very day, for it is daylight and we had better scatter. Yes, I'll give the case to Sandy Martin."

He kept his word, and that very day Sandy

got his new case. He had just got through with his old one, having been called as a witness to testify to the finding of the body of Mrs. Ernest Stanard, who committed suicide through jealousy of her husband.

Sandy was immensely flattered and promised to do his utmost to deserve Mr. Knowles's good opinion, which had been extended to him. So that very day he began his search for his own last client.

Little did he imagine the missing heiress was the woman he had seen stretched in the cold embrace of death!

CHAPTER XXI.

MISS SOPHIA BLOOM.

STANARD hastened away from his interview with Elna, for he had no time to lose. He intended that one of his most unscrupulous friends (if the word *friend* can be applied to such men) should reach Boston before Elna.

Accordingly he lost not one moment in finding the man who was well-fitted for the work in hand. He met him at the Grand Central Depot, where he was generally to be found on the arrival of trains. His name, or rather one of his names, was Shag Wilson, and he was a professional "steerer," or confidence man.

"Hallo!" cried this individual, on catching sight of Stanard, "what's up?"

"I want you to go to Boston straight off—go to Lynde street, to Sophy Bloom, and tell her this."

He then proceeded to relate, in his own way, the story he had already told Elna. "You catch on, don't you, Shag?"

"Yes. Sophy can put in the soft soap."

"Oh, of course; tell her to lay on the taffy, thick!"

"I suppose the girl is dumb as they make 'em?"

"Dumb as a fish; don't know enough to go in when it rains."

"All right. Sophy 'll work her for all she's worth. What comes next?"

"Tell her to keep her there till I come."

"All right. Let's have some stamps, for 'tain't healthy for me in Boston just now, and I'll have to lay low."

"Here's two hundred. Stay there till I come; I may need you."

"Ta, ta! I'm off!"

Needless to say, Shag Wilson reached Lynde street before Elna did. It was eleven o'clock in the day when the hack the tired little woman had hired at the station set her down at the door of Miss Sophy Bloom's residence, and that artless young lady was ready for her.

A frowsy servant showed her into a reception-room, which was quite a study of shabby splendor. Cotton lace window curtains caught the dust from the street and shook it out over a gaudy carpet; second-hand piano, and dirty plush chairs and lounges; cheap vases and ornaments were arranged in every direction, and the whole room bore an up-all-night dissipated look.

Elna had not long to wait, for a footstep sounded on the stairs and a young woman entered.

"I am Miss Bloom," she said, with a smirk, which was intended for a smile, but was killed by affectation.

Elna looked at her, and knew she was not a lady by intuition.

She was a pale, weary woman, with an old-young face; she had the same look as the room, and bore the story of her life indelibly engraved on her countenance.

She had been, from her childhood, the associate of gamblers, and other thieves. She was not an immoral woman, but falsehoods and frauds were like veritable milk and honey to her lips.

She held Elna's card and the letter which Stanard had given her, in a thin white hand which was loaded with costly rings, and still could never for one moment be mistaken for the hand of a lady.

"You are Miss Church, I presume?" she said, politely.

The little woman bowed, she did not like Miss Sophia Bloom, and could not forgive her for stealing Dolf.

"Well, I see Mr. Stevans wishes me to tell my story. Mr. Church proposed to me last Christmas, and I made all my preparations to be married."

"Yes?"

"He was of course very handsome, and he said he'd have to go to New York to get his mother's consent. He said she had heart-disease, and he had to be very careful not to agitate her. I was awfully angry when he never came, and I made inquiries and found he visited you; so I stole the boy."

"What good did that do?" asked Elna, simply.

"None, of course," replied the woman, blinking her large black eyes, which were as expressionless as two door-handles, and set in her pasty white, prematurely-old face in a frame-work of wrinkles. Her nose was insignificant and spoke eloquently, to a physiognomist, of a cunning nature; her thin lips told of a cruel heart, and her pointed chin and naturally small ears of meanness. Her hair was dark and elaborately arranged, and she wore a crimson wrapper trimmed with white lace.

"No," she resumed, as Elna kept silently regarding her, "it did me no good, and I've fully made up my mind to give the boy back to you."

"Thank you. Where is he?"

"Well, you'll have to wait till I send for him. I was afraid you'd employ detectives and all that, so I didn't dare keep him with me, of course."

"When can you have him here?"

Miss Bloom hesitated; she did not "get on" with Elna. The pure, straightforward gaze of the childish blue eyes made her feel uneasy. Elna was essentially a lady, truth and honor surrounded her as its delicate perfume encircles a rose, and falsehood and meanness felt abashed in the uncongenial atmosphere.

"I don't know just when. He is with intimate friends of mine, and the last time I saw him he had a bad cold, the doctor said it wouldn't be safe to move him."

"Oh, he is ill! My boy will die!" cried Elna, piteously wringing her hands.

"No, he ain't ill. I'd tell you in a minute if he was. He is all right, except a little cold, but you must wait here till he comes."

"Tell me where he is, that I may go and see him."

"I can't, for my friends don't want me to give them away, of course."

"Well, I'll go away, and please send me word the moment the child comes."

"You need not go away. Stay here in welcome. I'll do my best to make you comfortable, and you can save your money."

"Thank you. If my presence will not put you to any inconvenience."

Elna would gladly have put up with any amount of discomfort rather than lose one moment's time in seeing her boy.

"None at all. If you come with me I will show you the room you can occupy during your stay."

Elna followed her hostess along a hall and up a stairs, both of which wore the same aspect as the parlor. Miss Bloom threw open a door near the top of the stairs.

"There you will be comfortable, I hope," she said, with one of her artificial smiles.

"I cannot feel comfortable until I see my child," replied Elna, coldly.

"Well, try and be as happy as you can. I have two gentlemen boarding with me. Would you prefer to take your meals alone or dine with us?"

"I would prefer to have my meals here."

"Very well. Please ring when you want anything," and Miss Bloom left Elna alone and sought the more congenial society of Shag Wilson.

"Well?" demanded the emissary, when the lady entered the back room, where he sat in company with a pitcher of beer and a number of sporting papers.

"Stanard has a queer taste. I never saw such a namby-pamby doll baby in my life," was the woman's quick answer.

"Ain't she pretty?"

"Well, that's to your taste. She has a pink and white face and big blue eyes like china saucers, and a lot of fuzzy light hair, but no style, no air about her at all."

Miss Bloom sat down and washed down the sentiment in a glass of beer.

"She's the widow of that fellow who was found dead in a bath-tub, or some such rum start."

"What?"

"She's the widow of Church, the man who was found in a bath-tub dead."

"And has she got money?"

"Not now. She don't know she has any, and Stanard, who is as deep as a well, is going to marry her, and then claim the stamps."

"I see."

"It seems the fellow married her on the sly, and couldn't tell his folks; so this little fool don't know he is dead, and she is sitting back while his cousins and people roll in riches."

"My gracious, what dumb luck fools always have!"

"You may say so. When she is married to Stanard, up he'll walk with the paper which says, 'Here is Randolph Church's widow and son, and thus take possession of the whole snap.'"

"What paper do you mean?"

"Why, this greenhorn's marriage-certificate."

Miss Bloom was silent for a long moment.

"Ain't Church's folks never seen her?" she asked carelessly.

"No, I believe not."

"Well, it is a funny business. Where's the kid?"

"In New York. Stanard had him with his wife, but she's just poisoned herself. He's got to stay there till the inquest is over."

"You don't say?"

"Yes; she was Spanish, I believe—a fearfully jealous woman, used to raise his wages every time she got hold of him."

"He's a bad fellow; I don't like him."

"He's a cool hand, anyhow."

"Too cool for my use."

"Why, the fellows used to think you were sweet on him, Soph."

"Pshaw! The fellows were fools."

"Well, I'll take a sleep, if you'll tell me where I am to roost this time."

Miss Bloom disposed of her other guest, and then sat down to think.

Under her roof she had a woman who was heiress to great wealth and did not know it.

All the woman had to do was to produce a certain paper and step into the enjoyment of a large fortune. The parties who were now in possession knew nothing of her appearance, had never seen her—in fact, were not aware of her existence.

What could be more simple than for Miss Bloom to rob her unsuspecting guest of the marriage-certificate and claim the fortune of Randolph Church?

This was the temptation that now assailed Miss Sophia Bloom.

The fellows had been correct in their suspicions. Sophia did love Ernest Stanard, and had loved him from the first time she ever saw him. She was the orphan daughter of a notorious forger, and had been brought up as the companion of crooks, male and female. Her parents were both dead, and she now kept a boarding-house for shady characters of both sexes. She had never committed any crime, and was much respected by those who frequented her house—but she had inherited her want of principle from her father. Her mother had been a good woman, whose heart had been broken when she learned what her husband's calling was. She had died early, and left her daughter to become what she was—a heartless, unscrupulous person, who loved gold, and cared not how she obtained it.

"I'll do it," she decided, after due deliberation. "I'll steal the paper and propose it to Stanard. If he says 'no,' I'll let him marry her, and I'll go to New York and claim this money."

With this determination she set herself to work to try and gain Elna's confidence, for she was anxious to ascertain whether she had brought the important document to Boston with her.

She prepared a dainty lunch with her own hands, arranged it temptingly on a tray, and carried it to the room where poor Elna was sadly awaiting news of her child.

"I've brought you your lunch," she said, "and I've sent off a telegram to hurry them. I said to send the little boy on without one hour's delay, for I know how anxious you are to see him."

"Oh! thank you!" returned Elna. "I am afraid I treated you coldly, but I have been thinking how much you suffered, and as long as you now repent your cruelty in taking Dolf away, and are willing to restore

him, I've made up my mind to forgive you."

"Thank you. Oh! we will be good friends yet," exclaimed the treacherous creature, placing the tray upon a little table.

"Now," she added, taking a seat near Elna, "that I've told you my story, won't you tell me yours?"

Elna looked at Miss Bloom doubtfully; she still distrusted her. Would she confide in her, or not? She blamed herself for suspecting the honesty of the other. Why should she doubt her?

In spite of a warning voice within her heart, she resolved that she would in turn tell her story.

CHAPTER XXII.

SANDY MARTIN STRIKES A CLEW.

MABEL NELSON faithfully and untiringly kept up her watch every night for a week, but during that time heard and saw nothing of any consequence. Oello preserved a dignified silence, and Sura seemed calmly indifferent to her mother's feelings.

As she had asserted, she held Oello and her brother in her power. She cared nothing for her mother, and, like Stanard, loved herself alone. None of the faithful devotion of the Indian woman's nature had been transmitted to either son or daughter; they were utterly selfish and callous. Their mother had been a slave and was still but a servant, and they were base enough to despise her on that account.

Sura had learned to love Randolph Church, but even that feeling had been purely selfish. She had been brought up as a dependent, and had always dreaded an enforced return to her humble position. Randolph's wealth and surroundings had been the greatest attraction in her eyes. If she had married him her future would have been assured. She had not shed one tear for him, and her shallow love had given way to deep-seated enmity when she learned that he preferred another.

Oello had no intention of informing Mrs. Church that her supposed niece was an impostor. She had merely used the threat to frighten her daughter, whose new-found boldness made her tremble.

She had failed, and she now stood helplessly looking on and awaiting events. She had lost heart, for her nights were hours of torture from her superstitious terror of what she believed to be the spirit of Randolph Church, which was her nightly visitant.

Sura had treated her with contempt, and her son she had not seen for some time; so she moved through the house in a spiritless fashion that attracted the attention of the whole household.

While Knowles thus rested, baffled for the time, in enforced idleness, Sandy Martin worked hard in his vain quest for the true heiress to the Church fortune.

Sandy followed up clues that led to nowhere with faithful assiduity. He traced all sorts of women to all sorts of hiding-places, but never came anywhere near the truth till he felt that all his old misfortunes had returned to him a thousand fold.

Wearied and dispirited, he one day happened to think that Mr. Stanard had mentioned that the letter left by his dead wife had been written in Spanish. Ernest had given this as a reason for reading it to Sandy instead of giving it to him for examination.

One of the heiresses of whom Sandy was in search was Spanish-American. Would Mr. Stanard be of any service in giving advice?

Sandy determined to try.

He called at the house where poor Ubaldina had fretted and pined. Mr. Stanard was not at home—he had left altogether. Where he had gone the servant girl could not say, but fancied that the landlady knew. Sandy felt tired and liked to talk, so he requested to see the landlady. She soon appeared, with her apron on inside out, to hide the dirt spots, and her hair smoothed down with soapy hands.

"How are you, ma'am?" saluted Sandy, politely.

"Pretty well, sir, considerin'."

"I wish to know if you have Mr. Stanard's present address?"

"Sit down, sir. Excuse the dust, but if a

person was a centipede they wouldn't have legs enough to stand all the comin's and goings. My heart's broke!"

"Never mind, ma'am; I'm a family man myself."

"Well, Mr. Stanard's address is what I couldn't fin', not if you was to put me on racks and thumb-screws, for he left that sudden, but quite the gentleman, and all little Dolf's clo'ses wet—the innocent angel; and her to go p'izen herself after taking the child from his lawful parients, which, if poor, was no matter, and better a crust of bread and contentment than diamonds and late hours, and flying in the face of Providence and laudanum."

Out of this Sandy gathered, with a keenness none of his acquaintances would have given him credit for, that Mr. Stanard had left some of his adopted son's wearing apparel behind him.

"Did I understand you to say that Mr. Stanard left the child here?" asked the artful Sandy.

"No, no; thanks be to the Lord, not at all; not but what he was a handsome child, with sweet, pretty ways; but poverty comes in, and love flies out, and I can't make two ends meet now, let alone adopting other people's children, which you don't know the parients, and Mrs. Somers, a friend of my husband's sister's son-in-law, had one out of the orphan's home, with a father on the island, and a mother took out of hogsheds in a brewer's yard regular, in such a state of madness from stale beer to that degree that four policemen was not sufficient, not counting clubs and a fractured skull at the end of it."

The landlady paused for breath, and looked around in modest triumph.

"So it was only the child's clothing that he left?"

"Yes; which I am ready to refund at a moment's notice, for in this same house have I let rooms for eighteen years and never kep' so much as a pin."

"I'd like to see them. Is there anything else?"

"Nothing but some old letters, which no one can read, rolled up in a wad and shoved into one of the vases on the mantle-piece; cost two-fifty apiece at Ridley's when times was good and my two parlors let to the French dancing master from Dublin—Moon-sore Sullivany."

"I'd like to see the letters, too," said Sandy, while the landlady sighed heavily, and wiped her face on her apron, regardless of grease.

"Well, I'll show them to you, but I don't know about giving them, for murders and suicides is things I ain't accustomed to, and you can't never let the rooms again, for peo-will say they walk—and never happened to me before since the German baron owed me eighty dollars and was warned out and cut his throat on Christmas eve in my second floor back, ruined my carpet, and I always think he did it for spite."

She produced two letters and a small bundle of clothing for a child. The letters were written in a small, peculiar hand, in the Spanish language, but Sandy made out the words, "Lima—Peru," at the top, and below them the name, "Ubaldina."

"Ubaldina! what an odd name!" he said, musingly, trying to remember where he had heard it.

"That was Mrs. Stanard's name," explained the landlady.

"Was it? Then that's how I heard it; but, let me see."

Sandy rubbed his chin and stared at the ceiling reflectively. Like a flash it came to him:—the name he had heard was Ubaldina Church! and her native place was Peru! Had he purely by accident stumbled upon the right clew?

"Mrs. Stanard was a Spaniard, I believe?" he said at length, for the landlady was watching him rather suspiciously.

"Yes; at least I think so. She was from some place where it is always hot weather."

"Peru?" suggested Sandy.

"Yes, that's the place."

The good woman had not been sharp enough to find out the heading of the letters.

"Will you allow me to carry these letters to a friend of mine who can read Spanish?"

"Carry them away? Oh, no! I am afraid, for Mr. Stanard may come back and ask for them, or some of the police. You know

people can't be too careful in suicides and murder cases."

If Sandy had been gifted with what is termed by small boys who usually express themselves concisely—*sand*—he would have at once displayed his shield and frightened the good lady so much that she would have been not only willing but anxious to get rid of him. Sandy, however, was not *sandy* except in name and complexion. He allowed the opportunity to pass, and so lost it forever.

"So Mr. Stanard took the child and left?" he asked, giving up the letters with a sigh.

"Yes; but I can't say that he wasn't quite the gentleman, for he paid me a full month for the rooms, and he said, says he, 'By the time the month is up people will have forgotten all about this sad business; you know such affairs are but too common in New York.' Quite the gentleman, though I must say too giving to late hours."

"Yes," added Sandy, "he murdered his wife as much as if he had given her the poison."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the landlady in affright.

"She was jealous of him, and killed herself through jealousy."

"Well, that was her own fault. She was a dark-complected woman, and rather close-mouthed and ugly in her ways."

As the conversation now became of an uninteresting nature, Sandy left the house. He at once telegraphed to his principal, Knowles, as follows:

"Think I have found a clew. Meet me at the Sinclair House at two. S. M."

"To SARAH BROWN, No. — Fifth Avenue."

CHAPTER XXIII.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

ERNEST STANARD would have almost sacrificed every dollar he owned to hasten the, to him, insufferably slow movements of every one concerned in the inquest on his wife's remains.

He chafed over the delay, for he longed to be in Boston, where poor Elna had gone in her vain quest for her boy.

He must, however, have an interview with his mother before leaving.

He took little Dolf away from the house where poor Ubaldina had met her doom, for the child cried night and day for his "new mamma that the bad people took away in a box."

Stanard buried his wife in Evergreen Cemetery, and placed the child with a woman in Harlem till he could leave the city.

He called upon his mother, and their interview was a long one. Oello looked pale and anxious but received her son affectionately.

"Mother," he said, when they were both seated, "Ubaldina is dead."

"What?" cried the Indian woman, her eyes dilated and her face paled.

"It is true; her jealousy proved too great for her reason; she poisoned herself."

Oello gazed fixedly in her son's face; he neither averted his gaze nor changed color.

"I was afraid of this when you stole the papers," she said in a low tone.

"What do you mean?" he asked boldly.

"Never mind. What is done is done, but I'm tired of such work."

"You have grown cowardly," said the gambler, with a sneer.

"I am troubled by the spirit of the dead man," answered Oello, solemnly.

"Nonsense!"

"It is true. Every night he speaks to me, accusing me of the crime. Somewhere I heard that the blood of a murdered man calls out for vengeance. I believe it is true."

A mocking laugh was her reply.

"And Sura," she resumed—"she has grown bold; she will master us all yet."

"She'll never master me," returned Stanard, fiercely; "she knows better than try."

"No, she does not," returned his mother; she says you are in her power, and it is true."

"And she is in mine, also."

"No, she is not."

"What do you mean? Cannot I have her driven from this house at any moment as an impostor?"

"No, you cannot. She has stolen Ubaldina's papers, and can and does defy you."

Stanard muttered an oath and his black eyes flashed dangerously.

"That is your fault," he said, angrily. "I intrusted those papers to your care."

"I know it. I hid them, as I thought, but she is very cunning and she found them."

"Where are they now?"

"I cannot tell; she has them; she defies me, and every one else."

"Call her here. I must make terms with her."

"She cannot come here; you forget."

"True. Well, I'll see her elsewhere, and that must be when I return, for I intend to leave the city to-morrow."

"You always prophesied that Sura would become dangerous."

"Yes, I knew it. However, she can be easily managed. She may have the fortune of Ubaldina Church."

"But, she wishes all; she thinks she has enough influence over Mrs. Church to induce her to leave everything to her."

"Let her think so; the fortune is not Mrs. Church's."

He spoke significantly and looked at his mother with a meaning smile.

"No, it belongs to Randolph's wife."

"And the second husband of Randolph's widow."

"Ah! that is your game! I suspected as much."

"You were right, as you generally are."

"Do you think you will succeed?"

"I do. I generally play a close game, and I play to win."

"Well, you need not count upon me; I am done with the whole business."

"You have lost your spirit. You had better return to Peru," said Stanard, derisively.

His mother's copper-tinted cheek flushed. "You are like your sister," she retorted, bitterly.

"Did she advise you to return to Peru?"

"She did. She said if I remained I must always be her *servant*."

"Well, she is right. I did not give her credit for possessing so much good sense."

Oello said nothing; wicked woman though she was, she felt stung to the heart's core by the ingratitude of her worthless children. Though she had no heart for others, she loved them even as the viper loves and cherishes her venomous brood.

"I can make terms with Sura," resumed Stanard, carelessly, as he rose to go; "she must obey me or there will be war between us. Tell her so. Good-by! You may not see me again very soon. Try to get the papers from Sura; she will be easier to manage if she has not got them."

Oello did not reply, and after a good-by that was as cold as if the mother and son had been perfect strangers, the gambler left the house.

On the stairs he encountered Sarah Brown, who had not been aware of his interview with Oello.

The chambermaid eyed him sharply. It was unfortunate that Knowles had not mentioned to Sandy Martin the name by which the Indian woman's son was known when he engaged him to search for the missing heiress. He never dreamed of any connection between the gambler and the young woman from Peru, and Sandy, of course, never dreamed that his jealous lady client had anything to do with Knowles's case till he saw the letters which the landlady had found hidden away in their strange resting-place.

Hastening away from the house, Stanard at once took a train for Harlem, determined to lose no time in restoring Dolf to his mother.

The child was playing before the door of his new home when the gambler arrived.

"Well, Dolf," he said, taking him up in his arms and kissing his soft pink cheek. "I am going to take you to your mamma."

"My mamma? Has she got out of the ugly black box?"

"No; I mean your own pretty old mamma."

"My old mamma? But she has gone to look for papa," a very earnest look on his baby face.

"Well, we will find her."

"And papa too?"

"I don't know—maybe; but come and bid the lady good-by."

He paid the lady for her care of the boy and carried him away, little Dolf being wild with joy at the thought of once more beholding his pretty old mamma.

Elna had spent a miserable time awaiting the arrival of little Dolf. She had not been consoled by Miss Bloom's apparently well-meant efforts to keep her from feeling lonely.

In spite of an intuitive feeling of distrust, she had told the woman her simple story.

"Well," remarked the artful Sophia, "you are all right, as you have your marriage-certificate."

"Yes, but my heart is broken. I loved Randolph so, and trusted him so fully. Were it not for little Dolf, I would rather die than live, since my husband is false to me."

"Nonsense, my dear! But you live under a false name—that is wrong."

"What does it matter? Besides, it is not a false name; it is my husband's first name."

"Is the proper name on your marriage-certificate?"

Elna noticed the eager way the woman asked the question.

"Of course," she said, looking at her in surprise; "and my son is baptized by the same clergyman who married me, also in his proper name. My husband said that was necessary."

Sophia bit her lip. This was a complication she had not taken into consideration. The clergyman would be an important witness for Elna. She had also learned another fact—that the little woman was neither a fool nor a coward.

Innocent of all evil, and soft and gentle in her manner, she was undoubtedly; but she possessed sound sense and unquestioned courage.

Like most unprincipled people, Sophia fancied that every good person was a simpleton. She was just commencing to learn that this was not the case.

"I suppose you visit the clergyman now and then?" she asked, carelessly.

"I've seen him twice since he christened Dolf."

"And he remembers you?"

"Oh, yes. He has always spoken so kindly to me. I gave him my photograph, taken with Dolf in my arms."

"Worse and worsel!" said the schemer to herself.

"Did you tell him your husband had deserted you?"

"No; I would not do so; and, besides, he left New York before Randolph did."

"Where is he?"

"In Florida. He was very ill when he went away."

"Then he may be dead," suggested the crafty woman, the wish being certainly the father to the thought.

"I hope not, but he looked very ill."

"And he is the only one who knows your real name?"

"Yes; the only one besides my husband."

"Of course you carry the papers about with you?"

"I have them safe," answered Elna, who began to think Miss Bloom had too much curiosity for a well-bred woman.

Miss Bloom was sharp enough to see that she could go no further without exciting suspicion, so she left Elna to herself.

It was late in the evening when Stanard arrived in Boston. He drove at once to Lynde street, and jumping out of the hack rung the bell.

The servant appeared, and in answer to his inquiry said Miss Bloom was at home and had not retired.

"Tell her Mr. Stanard is here," the gambler ordered, and returning to the hack he lifted out Dolf, who was fast asleep. He carried the child into the parlor and laid him down on a couch. As he did so Miss Sophia entered, with a smile of welcome on her thin lips.

"Here I am, you see!" said Stanard, taking her hand and pressing it cordially.

"Always welcome," she replied, with a simper.

"Where is Mrs. Church?"

"In bed, I guess. She prefers to keep her own room."

"Well, I must see her; call her, Sophia, like a good girl."

"Wait a moment; I have something to tell you."

"Go on, then."

The gambler threw himself into an easy-chair with an impatient look upon his face.

"Of course Shag told me the story of the young woman up-stairs," said Sophia, seating herself near Stanard, and speaking in a low key to avoid waking the child.

"Yes, I told him to," replied Stanard, looking surprised.

"Well, I've improved on your plan, Ernest," smiling again.

"How?"

"Why shouldn't I steal the marriage-certificate and so pass for the widow of Randolph Church?"

He stared at her in unbounded surprise—never thinking of her true reason for forming this plot.

"Why shouldn't you? Because it is impossible," he answered, at length.

"No, it is not. I've asked her all about it. I can do it easily."

Still her reason did not strike the gambler's usually quick apprehension. He stared at her without in the least understanding why she wished to commit the fraud.

"Steal the certificate and pass for the widow?" he repeated, regarding her in a puzzled manner.

"Yes; why should you be under the unpleasant necessity of marrying that milk-and-water creature?" asked the woman getting bolder as she saw that he did not, in his own language, "catch on."

A long whistle was Stanard's reply. Sophia's pasty face turned red, and her bold, black eyes sought the floor as the gambler burst into mocking laughter.

"Why, Sophia, it is not leap-year!" was his contemptuous reminder.

Her face was like a flame, for, unwomanly as she had proved herself, she possessed pride if not modesty.

Stanard was still regarding her with intense amusement and unconcealed merriment.

"So the boys had truth on their side when they chaffed me about you, Sophy? Well, I'm awfully obliged and flattered that you should fancy me when you treat some fellows so coolly, but I'm engaged, you see. You should have spoken before!"

"When your wife was alive, I suppose," suggested Sophy, savagely.

"There, don't get mad, like a good girl. You can easily find a better man than me—Shag, for instance."

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it," retorted Miss Bloom, scornfully.

"Come, Sophie, don't cut up rusty," pleaded the gambler, coaxingly, for he did not want the girl to remain in a bad temper, as he still required her help to carry out his plot against Elna.

"I am not at all rusty, as you call it."

She was beginning to recover her equanimity outwardly, but within her bosom raged a fierce fire, while her thought was—"I'll be revenged."

"Well, my dear, will you call this milk-and-water woman?" asked the gambler, when he was satisfied that Sophia's temper had improved.

"Yes; you may have to wait, for I believe she is in bed."

"I'll wait with great patience."

Sophia left the room and Stanard indulged in another fit of laughter at her expense.

"To think of it!" he said, as he paced the floor. "So I've won the invulnerable heart of the fair Sophy, and so many fellows have tried in vain to gain the venerable fortress!"

He would not have given utterance to his sentiments had he known that the fair Sophy's car was at the key-hole.

"No, thank you, my dear girl. I must be very fascinating, though. That gives me hopes of winning what I so long for—the love of my soft-eyed darling—sweet Elna!"

He resumed his seat and Sophia rose from her knees and proceeded up-stairs with hatred and envy raging like twin serpents in her heart.

She opened Elna's door, without the formula of a knock, and found her sleeping.

She had not undressed, however, and lay upon a lounge, her head resting on her arm.

She had been weeping, and her cheeks were still wet, but she slept calmly, all unconscious of the evil presence near her. Sophia's eyes glared as she gazed upon the fair, child-like face, with its soft curves and pure tints—at the long, golden lashes and white throat. The gas burned low and the house was very still. Elna had spent many wakeful nights, and she slumbered soundly.

"Now is the time to rob her!" whispered Sophia to herself. "I wonder where she keeps her papers?"

She had exhausted every art to obtain that information in vain. Indeed, she had excited suspicion by her many questions, even in Elna's unsuspecting mind.

"Women mostly hide any valuable in some false drawer in their desks or trunks," Sophia thought, "but she has neither. I wonder if she carries them about with her? I'll see."

She deftly slipped her hand in the sleeping woman's breast. A baffled look came over her face.

"No, not there!"

She next tried her pocket, but with a like result.

"Somewhere in the room. I'll get her to go to Stanard and search till I find them, Mrs. Church!"

She shook her by the shoulder as she called her name.

"What's the matter?" cried Elna, waking in alarm.

"Why, how sound you sleep! Your son has arrived; he is down in the parlor."

With a glad cry Elna sprung to her feet. She hastened away without noticing that Sophia did not follow. Indeed, she thought of nothing but Dolf. Throwing open the door, she rushed to the sofa and seized the child in her arms, while tears of joy ran down her cheeks like rain.

"My darling boy!" she sobbed, as she clasped him close.

Dolf woke with a start and a whimper, which changed to shrill-voiced cries of delight when he found his pretty old mamma.

"Now," said Stanard, coming forward when the mother and son had almost exhausted themselves kissing and embracing. "I have restored your boy, Elna, and I shall claim my reward."

"Oh! Mr. Stevans—how glad I am to see you. I have been so unhappy in this terrible house."

"Hasn't Miss Bloom treated you kindly, then?" asked the gambler with a frown.

"Yes, she has, I'm sure, tried to be kind, but I don't like her, and I think she is deceitful. I could never like her, for she stole away first my husband's heart and then my child."

She clasped Dolf tighter than ever, and kissed his round, pink cheek over and over.

Stanard could scarcely repress a smile. Poor Sophia was certainly not guilty of either crime, though she bore the blame of both.

"I have much to tell you, Elna. Suppose you send Dolf to bed and return?"

Elna looked grave.

"I do not like to trust him out of my sight," she answered, shivering. "I am afraid of Miss Bloom."

"Nonsense! She has no longer any cause to wish you ill. Put him in your own bed, lock the door and come back. I must say something to you before I leave the house."

He looked so grave and determined, that Elna knew it was useless to argue; so she took her boy up in her arms and carried him away.

She talked gayly to him as she bore him up-stairs, and the sound of her voice warned Sophia of her approach.

The woman fled just as Elna reached the top of the stairs—flew along the hall like a guilty creature, concealing among the folds of her dress a small parcel—poor Elna's precious papers.

Dolf was very weary, so he soon slept, and Elna only remained long enough, after seeing his blue eyes shut, to arrange her hair.

She then descended to the parlor. Stanard's dark face was very pale as he closed the door after Elna, and took a seat near her.

"Now, Elna," he said, taking her hand in his and pressing it gently, "the time has come for you to learn the truth."

CHAPTER XXIV.

KNOWLES MAKES A DISCOVERY.

KNOWLES had not a very high opinion of Sandy Martin's sagacity, but he lost no time in responding to the telegram. He was at the Sinclair House before the little detective, who came bustling in just as the clock struck the hour.

"Ah! Here you are!" saluted Knowles; "now for your clew."

Sandy related the history of his visit to Stanard's landlady, and the finding of the letters.

"What was this man's name?" asked Knowles, eagerly seizing his assistant by the arm.

"Stanard. He is the husband of a lady who engaged me to pipe him because she was jealous."

"And she committed suicide. Are you sure she was his wife?"

"Yes, of course."

"And her name was Ubaldina?"

"So the landlady says."

"Sandy Martin, you are the keenest man on the force; but we will have to go to Woodlawn for our heiress; for, if I am not mistaken, the jealous woman who poisoned herself was Miss Church."

Sandy looked puzzled; he knew nothing about the case except the fact that two ladies were missing, and that Knowles was employed to find them.

"She was Mrs. Stanard," Sandy again averred.

"Exactly. Well, the further I go into this affair the more bewildered I become. So that villain married the heiress and set his sister up in her place?"

"What villain?"

"Hush, Sandy! You must forgive me if I keep things to myself a bit. I ain't clear about this thing myself yet. Enough to say—you have thrown more light on it than I was able to do. Go ahead! Give me this woman's address—the one who has the letters."

Sandy gave the address, which Knowles took down: "Mrs. Cooper, — Twelfth street."

"I'll visit the lady and see if I can induce her to part with these letters. I know some one who can read them," he said carelessly, for he was afraid to trust too much to Sandy.

He did not doubt his honesty, but he *did* doubt his discretion.

"I don't think she'll give them to you," announced the little man in a disappointed manner. He thought something else ought to be done.

"Well, I'll see. Now, Martin, I believe you have found one woman; look for the other one, and may luck attend you! Good-by! Wire me if anything happens."

With these words he was off, and he never stopped till he rung Mrs. Cooper's bell.

Mrs. Cooper wasn't home. Knowles was nonplused for a moment, but only for a moment.

"You can give me what I want just as well, miss," he informed the girl.

"What is it?"

"Two letters which were found in a vase on the mantle-piece in Mrs. Stanard's room."

"I can't give them; they ain't mine."

"See here, young woman, I'm a detective. Do you wish me to arrest you for contempt of court?"

Knowles put on his sternest face, and spoke in a severe tone, for he saw that the girl was disposed to be insolent.

"Oh!" and she looked thoroughly frightened.

The detective resumed: "You and your mistress will have to answer to the coroner for not producing the letters at the inquest."

"Oh! my gracious! How could we, when we didn't find them till it was all over, and Mr. Stanard and little Dolfus gone?"

"Well, I'll see if I can save you, providing the letters are placed in my hands at once."

"I'll give 'em to you. Dear knows I'm scared to go through the halls after dark and that nervous that I can't sleep."

"Are you the young lady who overheard the quarreling on the night of the suicide?"

Sandy had told him the whole story.

"Yes, sir—oh! Mrs. Stanard was a terror! Not but what I'd get mad if I had a husband that staid out nights."

"Yes; it must be very unpleasant for a lady to be left alone," admitted Knowles. He saw that it would be possible to draw the girl out, and the fuller his information the better.

"Of course he got the child to keep her company, but you see she right off got jealous of the mother."

"Jealous of the child's mother? What child?"

Knowles was seated comfortably in the dingy parlor where poor Ubaldina had fretted away so many hours.

Miss Jenkins sat down, too, for resting herself was a luxury she thoroughly enjoyed.

"Why the adopted child—the little boy."

"Did she have an adopted child?"

"Yes, he was brought here one day by a man—a sweet, pretty boy, with the goldenest curls I ever saw. It seems he spoke about his mamma being a great beauty and Mr. Stanard was a constant visitor, so Mrs. Stanard got as mad as a hornet."

"Very natural and proper, I think."

"Well, so I do, too; but Mrs. Cooper she said it was all nonsense, for all the men was alike, and you couldn't trust them out of your sight, which I don't believe, for if I did I wouldn't get married, not if the man was hung with diamonds."

This was wide of the mark, so the detective asked:

"Where is this boy now?"

"Mr. Stanard took him away after the funeral, but his clothes are here."

"Let me see them."

Miss Matilda Jenkins went to a closet and took from it a bundle containing several articles of a child's dress.

Knowles turned them over absently, he could scarcely tell why.

Suddenly he started. On a prettily embroidered linen chemise was marked the name, "Randolf C."

"What was the child's name?" he asked, eagerly.

"Randolf; but we all called him Dolfus."

"What was his mother like?"

"We never seen her, but Mrs. Stanard said she had been deserted by her husband."

"Do you know her address?"

"No, sir; never heard it."

"Nor that of Mr. Stanard?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I'll take the letters and this bundle. If your mistress finds fault tell her she is lucky she had me to deal with."

Knowles left the house with his usually clear brain in a whirl. Had Sandy Martin been the means of finding out that this son of the Indian woman had not only made away with the real Miss Church, but had also obtained possession of Randolph Church's son?

"I'll need to boil this down," concluded the detective; "but maybe Miss Mabel can throw some light on it when she sees these letters. I'm afraid we are still far from the end. It is the worst tangle I ever tried to untie. First of all comes the murder, for a murder it was, though at one time I didn't think so. Then the complication of the secret marriage, and, on top of all, the false heiress usurping the place of the real one. A pretty considerable tangle, there's no two ways about it."

Mabel Nelson met the detective and Borrowdale after all the rest of the household had retired to rest.

"More work for you, miss," announced Knowles, producing the letters. He had not yet told the valet of his success.

Mabel sat down with the letters before her.

"These letters are from Lima," she said, "and they were written within three months."

She slowly began to read. Ere she had turned the first page the door of the room was flung violently open and there stood Mrs. Church and her pretended niece!

"Well!" exclaimed the old lady, while Borrowdale, Sarah Brown and Mabel looked thunderstruck and dismayed.

"Well, Miss Nelson you really *are* a credit to your father's family. Thank fortune you exhibit no traits that mark your descent from mine."

"Madame!" stammered poor Mabel, overwhelmed with confusion and gazing helplessly around her.

"It is one o'clock, Miss Nelson, and I must exert my authority in my own house

enough to request you to retire to your own chamber till daylight, when I trust you will see the propriety of seeking other and doubtless more congenial lodgings. Borrowdale, come to me in the morning for your wages, and when you leave my house take your niece with you. Come, my dear!"

With these words, and a last scathing glance of scorn at her niece, Mrs. Church swept haughtily out of the room, leaning upon the arm of the usurper, who also looked upon Mabel with the greatest contempt.

"Well!" said Knowles, when the sound of the two ladies' footsteps died away, "if *that* ain't the biggest set-back I ever got in the whole course of my life! Got our walking-papers at short notice. Never mind; the ghost that haunts the old squaw ain't disposed of yet."

CHAPTER XXV.

"IF I DIE FOR IT!"

SOPHIA BLOOM's cunning was too much for poor Elna's simplicity. She easily found the precious papers, which the little woman had foolishly hidden between the mattresses of her bed.

She had just rearranged the bed-clothes when she heard Elna's voice as she ascended the stairs with her boy in her arms. Like an evil spirit she hastened away, hiding the precious papers among the folds of her dress.

"Ah, ha!" she said triumphantly, as she locked herself in her own room to examine them. "You are beaten, Mr. Stanard. I'll teach you to insult me! You prefer your white-faced miss. Very well; you may have her!"

She seated herself and spread out the papers with a satisfied air. The baptismal register of Randolph Church, son of Randolph Church and Elna, his lawful wife, came first. The baptism had been performed by the Rev. John Moorhouse, in the Lutheran Church Emanuel, No. — East 87th street, New York. Then came Elna Hansen's marriage certificate, which predated the other nearly two years. The marriage had been performed by the same clergyman, in the same church.

"Now!" said Sophy Bloom, triumphantly, "I can lay claim to the fortune of Randolph Church, and snap my fingers at Mr. Ernest Stanard and his lovely and engaging wife!"

She placed the two documents in a small inner drawer in her writing-desk, and locked them up safely. Then she descended to the lower floor and took up her station in a small room where Shag Wilson was playing solitaire with a pack of cards that had seen better days.

"I say, Soph, how much longer have we got to live here in this quiet, high-toned way? Blamed if I ain't sick as a beached clam of the whole snap!"

Sophia's shallow black eyes flashed.

"Well, we have all got into the way of letting Mr. Stanard walk over us."

Shag looked thoughtful and scratched his head.

"For my part, I don't see why we could not have our friends to drop in as usual, as the lady has been sulking in her own room ever since she came here," declared Sophia, with the evident intention of irritating the uneasy Mr. Wilson, who pined in seclusion by Stanard's request.

"No, nor me neither, by thunder! However, I suppose we shall have a grand wedding now, to liven us up!"

Shag blinked inquiringly. He knew that the fair Sophia was fond of Stanard, and he dreaded an outbreak of her temper, which he knew from experience to be far from angelic.

"As he is to get such a rich and beautiful wife, he'll surely act in a generous manner by his old friends—eh, Shag?"

"I'd think so," said Shag, who did not intend to commit himself.

"Yes; he'll be too high-toned to speak to us when he's a leader of tony society in New York, so we'd best make the most of him while we've got him."

Shag laughed bitterly, and Sophia, at that moment was called away to attend to some household matters.

Elna's face was full of surprise and alarm

when Stanard spoke in such a serious tone. She gently drew away her hand from his and folded it with the other in her lap.

"You may blame me for deceiving you, Elna, but I had not the heart to tell you the whole truth. You feel so acutely that it almost kills me to see how you suffer, but you will be very brave, will you not?"

He looked tenderly in her face, but Elna shrunk back from the expression in his eyes which she did not comprehend.

At the same moment she blamed herself for her want of gratitude to her faithful and devoted friend.

"Elna, do not look at me in that way," he said, pleadingly.

"Tell me what you have to tell," she replied, a little decisively, for his manner became more strange every minute. His gaze seemed to scorch her face, and she felt half afraid of him.

"I told you that your husband was false to you."

"Yes— Oh! how could he forget all the love we feel for each other?"

"You still love him, then?"

Stanard's tone was very significant.

"Love him! Of course I do! If he is false to the vows he swore at God's holy altar, I am not. I am a faithful wife. I love him and always shall."

"I am glad of that, Elna—and at the same time sorry."

"Glad and sorry? I do not understand you!"

"I am glad you forgive your husband the injury he has done you, for, Elna—be calm and bear it bravely—your husband has gone to be judged by another far higher judge than you!"

The hypocritical villain raised his eyes and hands to Heaven.

"What do you mean?" cried the little wife, turning ghastly pale and trembling from head to foot.

"Just what I say," answered Stanard, solemnly.

"May God help me!" gasped Elna, clasping her hands over her throbbing heart—"do you mean that my husband is dead?"

"I do!"

"Dead! My Randolph—my darling!"

She sunk back white and senseless.

Stanard raised her and bore her to the lounge on which he laid her tenderly. He opened the window and applied smelling-salts, which he took from his pocket, to her nostrils.

He was tempted to pollute the purity of her lips by a caress, but she opened her eyes with a look of horror to find his face so near her own.

"Are you better?" he asked, anxiously.

"Yes. Have I been ill? Oh! tell me, did I dream it?—did some one say my husband was dead?"

"I said so, Elna. It is true; he has been dead for months."

"Dead for months, and you told me he had deserted me!"

Her tone was full of reproachful anguish.

"So he did, before he died."

"I do not believe it!" exclaimed Elna, stung to the heart by grief and pain.

Stanard grew pale.

"Do you think I would tell you a falsehood?" he asked, with dignity.

"You may be mistaken."

"No, I am not mistaken. Randolph gave me your photograph and told me to seek you out and offer to pay your passage back to Denmark, where he would support you and his child in comfort if you promised never to trouble him."

Poor Elna listened to all this with a dazed face; she was utterly bewildered.

Full of grief for her husband, whose death she could not realize, and hurt to the heart's core by the thought that he had cruelly abandoned her, even the sacred luxury of loving grief was denied her, for her trust and confidence in her husband's honor were rudely shaken.

"How could he be so heartless?" she murmured, in broken accents.

"Yes, Elna. He forgot you for another. Every one is not blessed with ever-faithful hearts."

"I thought Randolph's heart was as true as mine; and he loved Dolf."

She was crying, her breast almost torn

apart by heavy sobs, while tears streamed down her clear cheeks.

"Elna, do not grieve so!" pleaded the wily gambler, taking her cold hands in his. "You are very young; you have your boy and many happy years before you."

"Yes, I have my boy; I shall live for his sake—but happy years! ah, no! I can never be happy without my husband!"

"You can and will be happy. Randolph was not worthy of your love."

"I will not think him unworthy. He is dead now—dead! Oh, my Randolph!"

Again she drew her hand away, though she had no thought of his feeling toward her.

"There are others, Elna, who deserve your love—who would die to win it!"

"Others!" cried Elna, in amazement. "And my husband only just dead!"

"He has been dead for months."

"He was alive to me," she answered, with simple dignity. "I have only just heard of his death. I wish to hear more. Where did he die?"

"In his mother's house, in New York."

"And he never sent for me!" sobbed the little wife, tears again welling up to her innocent eyes and her voice choked by anguish.

"He could not, even had he been willing."

"Why? Surely his proud mother could not refuse to let me see him die?"

"He had no time to ask—no time for anything; he died of heart-disease."

An awe-stricken look came over her tearful face.

"Poor Randolph! My good, kind, noble husband!"

Stanard bit his lip. It was a difficult task to poison the pure mind of a good woman against the man she so tenderly loved.

"His mother is also affected by the same trouble," he added, after a pause.

"I know it; that was why our marriage was a secret."

"Well, Elna, it is fortunate for you that you have friends."

"True. I have not forgotten your kindness. I owe all I now have in the world to you—my child."

"And you promised to reward me."

"Reward you? How can I? Am I not poor and friendless?"

"I don't wish for a reward that wealth can purchase," softly.

"What reward do you ask?"

"Elna, is it possible that you do not know how I have learned to love you?" asked Stanard, passionately.

She sprung to her feet.

"Mr. Stevens, do you intend to insult me?" she demanded, indignantly, her eyes flashing, her small form drawn up to its full height.

"Insult you? No, my darling. I wish to protect and cherish you."

He tried to take her hand, but she waved him away.

"Protect and cherish me! Is it possible that there are women who can listen to words like these the very hour that they hear of their husband's death?"

Stanard began to fear he had been too precipitate, but it was too late to draw back now.

He could not understand Elna's nature, and he had flattered himself that she had commenced to love him.

"Your husband has been dead for months," he declared once more. "I knew you were free when first I met you and I learned to love you. I have watched over you and cared for you, and I have restored Dolf to you."

"Yes; thank you for doing so."

"I want no thanks, Elna; I want you to bestow the same love on me you felt for Randolph. I am more deserving of it than he was, and I shall value it as the greatest treasure earth ever held."

"It is impossible for me to ever love you, Mr. Stevens. My heart cannot change; if it could, my love would not be worth possessing. I shall never love again."

Her tone was firm and her face wore a determined look.

"But, Elna, do not doom me to despair. You are alone in the world. Let me protect you and care for your child. Be my wife for Dolf's sake. I am willing to marry you

first, and teach you to love me afterward. You promised to reward me;—let my reward be this little hand."

He spoke with passionate pleading, and his eyes spoke more eloquently than his tongue.

"I cannot speak of love or marriage now," she said, not unmoved by his appeal.

"But you will bid me hope, my sweet one?" he questioned, with sparkling eyes.

"No. I promise nothing. The thought of having listened to you shocks me. I should blame another woman who did so; I should esteem her lacking in modesty and love for her husband."

Stanard was baffled; he had made little progress in pleading his cause.

"No woman has a right to waste her heart upon a worthless man," he declared, hotly.

"Hush! You must never again utter one disrespectful word of Randolph. He is dead, and he was my boy's father."

Her tears gushed forth anew at the word *was*. She was fast realizing her desolate condition.

"I would rather die than pain you, Elna," Stanard persisted, tenderly; "believe me, I love you better than life."

The truth of these words lent them force—bad, unprincipled and cruel though he was, he loved her.

"Hush! Do not speak to me so!" cried she, with burning cheeks. "I must go to my child. Good-night!"

He seized her hand and pressed it to his lips. She snatched it away and ran from the room.

"She is mine!" he said, exultantly, as he paced the floor. "She is mine!"

As Elna fled up-stairs she met Miss Bloom.

"What's the matter?" inquired the young lady, coldly. "You seem excited."

"I have just heard of the death of my husband!" replied Elna, confusedly.

"Indeed! Is that what you are blushing about? I thought perhaps you had just chosen his successor."

The taunt cut Elna to the heart. She felt that it was not unmerited.

"Good-night, Miss Bloom!" she said, with more dignity than Sophia had imagined possible to the "weakling."

"Good-night"

Elna sought her chamber, her heart throbbing violently with painful emotion.

Randolf was dead! That was the crushing thought which overpowered her. Though she had heard of his desertion, and believed it to be true, she had cherished a fond hope that he might yet return to her—a hope she had scarcely been conscious of, but it had enabled her to bear up; but now—that hope was gone! Never again should she see his face or hear his voice! He was the king of her life, and had passed away from her without even one parting word.

Gone, utterly gone!

She gazed upon her sleeping child, who daily grew more like his father, and laying her head down beside little Dolf's, she sobbed out her first wild burst of widowed grief.

While she had been with Stanard all her sorrow had been pent-up; she had not freedom to indulge it. Alone with her child, she could mourn for his father.

Stanard was not long left to enjoy his supposed victory over Elna's heart.

Shag Wilson had been impatiently waiting till he should be alone, for he wished to have an interview with him.

"Hallo!" said Shag, abruptly breaking in on Stanard's soliloquy. "What's the news, Stanard?"

"Nothing that can interest you," replied the gambler, coldly. He felt disgusted with the coarseness and vulgarity of his former associates.

"Hah! High-toned already!" said Shag, with a boisterous laugh; "that's what Soph said; didn't know it would take effect so soon, though."

Stanard saw that his friend was offended, and he did not wish him to be so; not that he regretted having wounded Shag's finer feelings, but he was not yet done with him. He might need him again.

"High-toned! Nonsense! What I meant was I hadn't any news of the boys in New York. Sit down. Ain't there anything to drink in the house?"

Shag rung a bell, and as soon as the neces-

sary refreshments were on the table he again approached the interesting subject of which they were both thinking.

"Well, how goes it with the widow?"

Stanard was silent a moment. He poured out and drank a glass of brandy.

"I'll marry her," he answered, with a look of determination, "if I die for it!"

"If you lose soul and body?" suggested Shag.

"Yes!" with a terrible oath—"if I lose soul and body!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE.

SOPHIA BLOOM was naturally vindictive. She was also excessively vain. She had been brought up among men whose interest lay in pleasing her, and had lived all her life in an atmosphere of flattery.

Her chief business, since she had lost her father, had been that of a "fence," or receiver of stolen property.

As a business woman, she had been singularly successful. She owned more than one store where she disposed of stolen goods under other names than her own. She also possessed horses and carts, which were used by the thieves to carry off their booty; and, indeed, Sophia was, in the language of her companions, "well fixed"—otherwise a wealthy woman.

She was also esteemed "smart," and for all these reasons had received a great deal of attention from professional gamblers and burglars. However, like the general run of mankind and womankind, she was dissatisfied with her mode of life. Her riches could not place her where she longed to be—in fashionable society.

Yes, she really, ardently longed to shine as a leading belle among what she termed "the tony set."

"What's the good of having diamonds, when no one sees them but thieves?" she said to herself, for she despised her companions thoroughly.

Stanard was the only man among them she would have married. He could act and look like a gentleman, and he was both talented and well educated. She knew he lacked principle, of course, but she fancied he might pass in decent society as a gentleman.

She loved the handsome Peruvian with all the love she was capable of, and her indignation, when she found that he preferred another woman, was great. She esteemed Elna a mere simpleton; did not even think her beautiful, for, in her opinion, perfection of form and coloring were nothing without what she termed "style."

Sophia had been angry before she encountered Elna on the stairs, but when she saw her rival's, as she supposed, happy blushes, she became furious.

"She is greatly uplifted, indeed!" were her thoughts. "I never saw her try to put on airs before."

Poor Elna's simple dignity she set down to pride over Stanard's offer of marriage—so little can a mean nature understand a noble one; she thought Elna gave herself airs over the very thing that had in reality humiliated the widow in the dust.

When Miss Bloom knew Stanard and Wilson were consulting together, she, of course, longed to hear what they had to say. She dreaded ridicule with all the horror of a small-minded, ignorant woman, and she knew that there is no honor among thieves.

Stanard would, she felt certain, boast of his conquest, and she should inevitably become the subject of coarse jokes and sarcasms among the people she despised and treated with contempt.

This thought made her blood hot, and she vowed vengeance against the man she had loved.

"He has made a convenience of my house, and treated me like a servant," she said, indignantly, "and I'll get square with him as sure as my name is Sophia Bloom!"

She stole softly into a deep closet in the back parlor, where she could hear every word spoken by the two men in the front room. Sophia would have made an able detective had she chosen that calling. With a pair of sharp scissors she had, on a former occasion, picked away the plaster and made an open-

ing into the next room which she had deftly concealed by the drapery of a small wall-pocket.

Here she took her stand, and every word uttered by the gambler was overheard by her. She had taken her place in the closet just as Stanard said—"If I die for it!"

She ground her teeth savagely, but eagerly listened for more. She heard Shag's remark and Stanard's reply; then Shag said laughingly:

"Why, I always thought you and Soph would make a match of it. She's stuck bad on you."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the gambler. "Yes, poor Soph has proved a victim to my charms. No, thank you; that would be a come-down! My first wife's father was at least an honest man. Then, too, our hostess is in the sere and yellow leaf, and I must confess I have a hankering for youth and beauty. What do you think, though—she actually proposed to me!"

He went off into fits of laughter at the recollection.

"Who?" asked Shag, in amazement.

"Why, Soph. Yes, she asked me to marry her with a good grace!"

"Suffering Moses! You don't tell me, and her so high-toned?"

"Yes; I always knew she was soft on me. My stars! *won't* the boys laugh!"

"Don't tell them," said Shag. "It's kind of mean. Soph's a good girl, and she's so thundering proud it would half kill her to think the boys knew."

"Who cares? It is too good to keep."

"Well, you are your own master, of course; but I wouldn't say one word about it if I was you. She's always treated you well; it's darned shabby to give her away."

The listening woman bit her lip till the blood started as she heard Shag plead for her. There was murder in her heart as she clinched her thin hand against her bosom.

"Pshaw! She'll never know, and it is too good to keep. The idea of her trying to act the lady—ha! ha!"

"See here, Stanard; Soph's a good girl and always kept straight, and whosoever hits her hits me—do you hear?"

Shag rose to his feet and looked the other villain straight in the face.

"Oh, don't you go to flying off the handle!" placated Stanard contemptuously.

"Well, let up on this racket, that's all," answered Shag sulkily.

Sophia crept out of the closet with the face of a corpse and the heart of a fiend. How to take revenge on Stanard she knew not, but vengeance—bitter vengeance—she was determined to have.

She passed up the stairs with clinched hands and eyes blinded by the wild rush of blood in her brain; and, almost without intending it, she found herself at Elna's door. She tapped, but the weeping woman never heard her.

Sophia pushed the door open. There lay the woman she had pictured to herself as one flushed with triumph, crying and sobbing her very heart out.

"What's the matter?" inquired Miss Bloom coldly.

Elna looked up in surprise; she had not expected to see her hostess again that night.

"Why are you crying?" inquired Sophia, seating herself beside the bed.

"Need you ask? My husband is dead," replied Elna, choking back her sobs.

"And you cry—you loved him, then?"

"Loved him—my husband?" cried Elna, looking up in amazement.

"Yes; I thought you no longer cared for him."

"I love him more than when he was alive. I shall love him to the last hour of my life. Oh, my darling Randolph!"

Sophia saw that the words came straight from Elna's heart—that she meant them. There was no pretense about her, she was the embodiment of truth.

"I thought you cared for that man downstairs," said Miss Bloom slowly, her eyes fixed on the little widow's face.

"Who—Mr. Stevens?"

"Yes; I believe that is the name you know him by."

"Why, is it not his name?"

"One of them," and Miss Bloom's face wore a peculiar smile.

Elna looked amazed.

"Has the man more than one name?" she asked innocently.

"More than one dozen, I guess."

"Why, how strange! What is the reason of that?"

"Because he is not an honest man," responded Sophia coolly.

"Not an honest man?"

Elna turned pale.

Sophia laughed her hard, mirthless laugh.

"Why, did you suppose he was a gentleman?" she asked, with glittering eyes and a deep crimson spot glowing on either cheek.

"Of course I did!" answered Elna in an alarmed manner, sitting up in bed, her golden hair in wild disorder.

"Ha! ha! Why, he is a gambler, swindler, confidence man."

"What is that?" asked Elna, her hand on Sophia's arm, her blue eyes dilated.

"Swindler—or to put it plainer—*thief*!" replied Sophia, who now took delight in stabbing Stanard's character.

"My God! but how could Randolph have him for a friend?"

"He never had. Your husband did not know him from a side of sole-leather."

"What? Why, he gave him my portrait, and told him to send me away to get rid of me."

"He never did. Your husband never spoke to him in his life."

"But Mr. Stevans told me so himself."

Elna was thoroughly bewildered. She began to think Sophia had gone mad.

"He told you a falsehood. Everything he told you from first to last was lies."

"Good heavens! Then my husband was not false to me—he is not dead!"

Her face glowed like a rose with love and hope.

"He was not false to you, but he is dead, I am sorry to say."

The hope slowly died out of Elna's face, but the love remained. She gazed at Sophia doubtfully.

"I see what you think," said Miss Bloom.

"You are wondering if I am crazy."

"No; I was only wondering what this man's object was in deceiving me so."

Sophia's time had come.

"Do you know that you are a very rich woman?" she asked.

"Now," thought Elna "I am certain she is mad."

"Don't stare at me so. Randolph Church, your husband, was worth I do not know how many millions."

"He did not give them to me," sadly.

"They are yours and your child's all the same. He died without a will. That is why Stanard stole the child, and that is why he wants to marry you."

"Stanard stole the child?"

Elna gave a terrified look around her.

"Yes, he stole little Dolf, and he wants to marry you for your money."

This statement gave Sophia the keenest satisfaction. Instead of looking mortified, to her surprise, Elna did not seem to notice it.

"Do you tell me that the man downstairs stole Dolf from me?" she asked, earnestly.

"Yes, he alone was the thief."

"Then why did you say you did it?"

Sophia broke into a laugh.

"Well, you know a person is obliged to tell many lies in this wicked world. He told me to tell you so, and I did it."

"But why?"

"Because he wanted to have you in his power, and he thought you would marry him as a reward for giving back the boy."

Poor Elna was dumfounded as the depth of her false friend's depravity was thus unfolded to her.

This was the man in whose word she had so implicitly trusted! How easily he had deceived her!

"Yes, he wants to go to New York as your husband, and that's why he got rid of his wife."

"Wife? Had he a wife?"

"Certainly he had, till he drove her mad and she poisoned herself."

"Merciful heavens! When?"

"Why, just the other day. The inquest is just over. He could not bring the boy on here till it was."

"And he had my boy all the time I was in such misery about him?"

"Yes; he sent a man here to me to tell me a story for your ears—all false from beginning to end. Why, I never saw your husband in my life."

"But why did you do his bidding?"

"Well, we are all alike here. My father was a forger, and I've been brought up with gamblers and thieves."

"Dear, dear! how terrible!"

Sophia smiled grimly.

"But you are honest, at least," said Elna, timidly.

"Yes, honest as all the rest," was the bitter reply.

"No; you are not like the rest, for if you were you would not warn me now. You are sorry for what you have done?"

How little did she know the motive that impelled Sophia's action!

"You hardly believe me," said Miss Bloom; for Elna was regarding her with a strange, questioning expression in her honest blue eyes.

"I do not know what to think. I must see Mr. Stanard, as you call him, and you must tell your story in his presence."

Sophia's pale face grew crimson. She felt that she would rather die than do as Elna suggested.

"I dare not!" she said, seriously.

"Why not? If your story is true you need not feel afraid to tell it."

Elna's suspicions were aroused, and she was mistress of the situation. Sophia felt desperate. She knew that Stanard's anger against her would be terrible if he ever learned the truth, and knew that she had betrayed him. She was no coward, and did not feel afraid of the risks she ran, but she did dread the scathing sarcasms with which he would overwhelm her in Elna's presence. She felt she would rather die than undergo such an ordeal.

"How can I convince you that am at least acting honestly toward you now?" she said, desperately.

"By calling this man here and repeating your story," replied Elna, coolly.

"I cannot! You know nothing of such characters as Stanard. Why, my life would not be safe an hour."

"And you act as you have done because you are my friend?" incredulously.

"Yes; how can I convince you? Oh! I have it! Where are your papers?"

The thought came like a flash. Sophia would rather restore the documents than be exposed.

"What papers?" asked Elna, turning pale.

"Your marriage certificate and your child's baptismal register."

"Here!"

Elna turned back the mattress and saw with horror that the papers were no longer there.

Dolf began to cry, for his mother's hasty action had disturbed his slumbers.

Elna took him in her arms and hushed him on her breast.

When he slept again she gently laid him back among the pillows.

"Where are my papers?" she asked, more boldly than Sophia ever expected to hear her speak.

"I have them. I stole them by Stanard's orders, and to prove that I am sincere I shall restore them to you."

"Do so, and advise me what to do next."

"Leave this house without an hour's delay. I shall send for a carriage for you and supply you with money to return to New York."

"Thank you."

Sophia left the room and returned in a few moments with the papers in her hand.

Elna was already arranging her dress to go, for she trembled with nervous terror when she thought of Stanard.

"I have sent for a carriage," Sophia advised her. "I hope the child won't cry, for Stanard is desperate. I heard him swear that you should be his wife if he lost soul and body."

"He is in the house?" asked Elna, pale with apprehension.

"Yes, but fast asleep. I listened at his door. He thinks all is safe. If the child is quiet all is well."

With Sophia's assistance Elna dressed her

boy, who began to whimper, but quieted down when Miss Bloom gave him a large package of candy and his mother told him he was going back to New York.

"Here," whispered Sophia, pushing a well-filled purse in Elna's hand.

"Oh! I don't need all this money!"

"Yes, you may have to employ a lawyer to get your own."

"But what is the use of money to me? My husband is gone."

Poor Elna felt like breaking down, but Sophia knew how to deal with her.

"Nonsense! Haven't you got your child to think of? Come, hurry, or we'll have Stanard here!"

At the mention of the name Elna seized her child in her arms, shook Sophia's hand, and hastily whispered that she would write and thank her; then ran swiftly down-stairs, out of the door, sprung into the carriage and was gone.

Sophia returned slowly to her room, pausing as she passed Stanard's door to shake her clinched hand and mutter:

"Now, I have a pleasant surprise for you when you wake—thank fortune, I shall be revenged."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LETTERS FROM LIMA.

"WELL," said Mabel, "as we have already done our worst, we may as well read the letters."

"Yes, read them. Please God they may throw some light upon the mysteries that surround us," said Borrowdale.

Mabel read them aloud, translating them as she read:

"DEAR UBALDINA:—

"I am not surprised that your base-born husband treats you as you say he does. I know too well that a woman never stoops without bitterly regretting it. You have acted very foolishly, but I shall try to help you. Meanwhile be patient; I will be in New York, I trust, within a few weeks; then we shall see what can be done. Watch him; find out all you can; but do not let him know you expect me or he will be on his guard."

"Business here is dull, but you do not understand such matters. Let me hear from you at once."

"Your loving uncle,

"MANUEL CANTRARIES."

"That letter is the oldest," said Mabel, "now comes one of a later date."

"LIMA, — — —, — — —."

"DEAREST UBA:—

"How very foolishly you have acted, but it is true that when a woman of your temperament loves she is for the time insane. Not satisfied with throwing yourself away upon the worthless son of Oello, you slave, you have denied your identity and placed her daughter in the position you should fill—deceiving Mrs. Church, and allowing that base-born girl to usurp your place in your aunt's house."

"No wonder you were ashamed to tell me the truth. I suppose I never should have heard it if I had not been coming to your city. You knew I would soon find it out for myself, so make a virtue of necessity and tell me."

"Foolish girl, to trust those people! I would not trust them or any one of their treacherous blood. Your parents did wrong to bring you up among them."

"But enough; I must not say one word, for I too have been foolish, and when I see you must sue for pardon. Write no more; but, above all, do not whisper to that husband of yours that I am coming. I will be with you as soon as possible."

"Your loving uncle,

"MANUEL CANTRARIES."

"This letter is only three weeks old," added Mabel, in conclusion.

"Those letters are worth their weight in gold ten times over!" exclaimed Knowles, enthusiastically. "They tell the whole story of the false heiress. The real one is dead—and, I believe—murdered!"

"Ah!" cried Mabel.

"Yes. Why should she kill herself when she expected this man to arrive and set matters straight?"

"In a moment of jealous rage," suggested Borrowdale.

"No! I don't believe it. Sandy Martin found out the beginning of this sad story, and little Sandy Martin shall find out the rest!"

"What is our next move?" asked the valet.

"We leave here to-morrow in good order, and Miss Nelson hires Mrs. Cooper's rooms, and waits for the uncle from Lima, who is our best witness."

"Yes; you won't be afraid, will you?" asked Borrowdale.

"Not at all! I am not nervous, and I am greatly interested in this case."

"You are the grandest woman in New York," cried Knowles, "and, as for Sandy

Martin, words fail to express my admiration for him."

The conspirators parted for the night, each going to his and her room; but none of them slept.

Mabel retained possession of the letters, and trembled with excitement when she thought how close they might be to the discovery of a crime.

She was more interested, however, in finding the widow and child of her cousin, and prayed earnestly for them. If, as Knowles seemed to think, they were in the power of Oello's son, how narrow was their chance of escape from the same fate that had overtaken Randolph and Ubaldina.

"God protect them!" she prayed to the God of the widow and the fatherless.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ELNA CONSULTS A LAWYER—OELLO'S DEATH-BED.

ELNA lost no time in leaving Boston, and when she arrived in New York was afraid to return to her old home.

She felt a perfect horror of Stanard, and imagined he was following her and would again rob her of her boy.

When she arrived in the city she went at once to a hotel and engaged a room. She had her breakfast sent up, and requested the waiter to bring her a Directory.

She had made up her mind to follow Sophia's advice, and employ a lawyer to take charge of her interest in her husband's fortune.

She longed to ask advice from some one, and thought of Mrs. Knowles, but dreaded Stanard too much to venture near her. She fancied that the gambler was watching for her, and he knew where the detective's wife lived.

The waiter brought up the Directory, and Elna told him to order a carriage, as she wished to go out at once.

"I'll open the book and take the first lawyer I come to," she said to herself.

Acting on this thoroughly feminine resolution, she chose the name of Stamford.

"It is a little like Stanard," she said, in a frightened manner. "But, after all, that may not be that terrible man's real name."

Dressing Dolf as well as she could, for she had scarcely any luggage, she drove off to the lawyer's office.

The pompous man was disengaged, and received her politely, for he had sense enough to appreciate a pretty face.

Elna sensibly and concisely related her story.

Mr. Stamford listened with an air of superlative wisdom.

"Yes, madam," he said, when the little woman had concluded, and fixed her blue eyes appealingly on his well-fed face; "I've heard of you before."

"Dear me! Who spoke of me—my husband?"

"No; I regret to say he did not show such good sense. A man should never neglect his wife and child. Fine boy, madam; image of his father."

"Yes, he is very like him," assented poor Elna, sighing heavily. "Well, sir, *who* spoke of me? I did not know any one else was aware I was married to Mr. Church. Was it Mr. Moorhouse?"

"No; I have not the pleasure of Mr. Moorhouse's acquaintance. It was Miss Nelson, your late husband's cousin."

"Did *she* know he was married?"

"She did, and the knowledge distressed her very much. She called and consulted me on the subject."

"Why was she distressed?" asked Elna, eagerly.

"She was distressed for fear that you might be in want. Your husband informed her of his marriage and showed her your portrait."

"Ah! then I have one friend in my husband's family, thank God!" exclaimed Elna, with deep feeling.

"Yes; Miss Nelson is a well-intentioned young lady. She will, I am sure, prove a warm friend."

"And please tell me what to do next, sir."

"Return to your hotel. I will see Mrs. Church without delay. I am her solicitor. It is fortunate that you came to me, as it saves trouble and publicity."

Elna took his advice. She returned to her hotel and patiently awaited the result of Mr. Stamford's visit to her husband's mother.

Meanwhile stirring events were transpiring in the Church mansion.

Early in the morning Mabel sought an interview with her aunt. The false heiress was present when the old lady, in reply to Miss Nelson's timid knock, haughtily answered:

"Come in!"

"Good-morning!" said Mabel, who was already dressed for the street, as she intended to leave the house at once.

"Good-morning, Miss Nelson!" replied Mrs. Church, whose pale face was even more cold in its expression than usual.

"I wish to say a few words to you in private before I leave your house, madam."

"Say them."

Ubaldina, as we shall call her for the present, neither rose nor looked around; she had not condescended to salute Mabel when she entered.

"I shall only say them in private," announced Mabel, firmly.

"Then they must remain unsaid, for I shall not receive you in private. A *person* who has forgotten how to act like a lady cannot expect to receive the courtesy that is extended to one."

"Of what unladylike conduct do you accuse me?"

"You show how lost you are to all sense of shame when you ask."

"I am perfectly unconscious of your meaning."

"You are? You are unconscious that you have been associating with my servants on terms of familiarity, having secret meetings with them when every one had retired."

"I do not deny it, but unfortunately you must yet learn the *reason* for my conduct, which appears singular."

"Excuse me; I prefer not," returned Mrs. Church, with a haughty wave of her hand.

"You will find money on the table. Hand it to her, my dear. You are at liberty to send your address to Mr. Stamford, who will arrange that a moderate sum be paid quarterly to you. I'll support you, but I cannot promise ever to see you again."

"You will live to regret your unjust treatment of me, aunt," said Mabel, sadly. "I have some money, and prefer to take nothing from *your hand*!"

She fixed her eyes on the evil face of the false heiress and left the room.

"Well, thank fortune she is gone!" said the Creole, vindictively. "I breathe more freely now that she has left the house."

This was perfectly true. Oello and her daughter had ever hated the humble, inoffensive woman, and had observed the meetings between Mabel and the valet with alarm, though they knew not their significance.

Sura's black heart swelled with triumph as she saw Mabel driven out, for she felt certain that Mrs. Church would now make her will entirely in her own favor. Ubaldina's death, too, had been a source of rejoicing, for by it she felt perfectly secure in the possession of her large fortune. She it was who had informed Mrs. Church of Mabel's secret interviews with Borrowdale and his supposed niece. She had conducted her to the spot and caught the guilty parties conspiring. She knew the mere fact of Mabel associating with servants was nothing short of a crime in her aunt's proud eyes.

She had triumphed, and she had never felt so safe. She paid Borrowdale and dismissed him, and now felt herself queen of the house.

That night, as midnight chimed, Oello, who was alone in her room, heard the shrill voice of her unseen accuser:

"Murderess!" it cried. "Slayer of Ubaldina and Randolph, prepare to meet justice!"

Oello fell on her knees, trembling, her limbs refusing to support her. Again the voice cried out its terrible warning. The old woman's nerves could not stand the strain; she fainted.

All night she lay upon the floor unconscious, and in the morning her daughter found her, stiff and speechless. She had been stricken by the hand of God, and all her right side was paralyzed!

She was placed in the bed, though she

tried to protest against it. No one understood her dumb signs but Sura, and she heartlessly refused to explain them.

The Indian woman observed this, and darted on the cruel and ungrateful child a look of deadly meaning.

"*She is done for!*" thought Sura, triumphantly. "Everything is going splendidly. The only person I dread now is Ernest. I am impatient till I hear from him."

She left her unfortunate mother to Mrs. Flutter's care.

"She is speechless and cannot harm me, and it is very disagreeable to see her. I hope it will soon be over," she said, as night fell and she heard the doctor announce that her "old nurse had not long to live."

The words were of course uttered inwardly; aloud she said:

"Oh! Poor woman! How I wish I could nurse her, but I am worse than useless in a sick-room, and awfully afraid of death. Mrs. Flutter will take care of her. I would go into spasms if she died in my presence."

"Do not go there, then, my sensitive child," said Mrs. Church, tenderly. "I doubt if the poor thing even knows you."

The heartless schemer knew better, but she retired to bed and left her mother to die—attended by strangers.

Midnight came around again; the wretched woman had been terribly restless from the time the twilight fell. She signed to Mrs. Flutter to draw near, and made desperate efforts to speak.

The good housekeeper sat down by the bed and kindly held Oello's hand in her own. Just before the hour chimed, Doctor Muir, who had been requested by Mrs. Church to pay the sufferer every attention, entered the death-chamber.

At the first stroke Oello started up, convulsively grasping Mrs. Flutter's hand.

"Listen!" she said, speaking quite distinctly, greatly to the doctor's surprise.

A shrill voice sounded from the bedside:

"Murderess! Slayer of Ubaldina and Randolph—prepare to meet justice!"

"My God!" cried the housekeeper. "A ghost!"

The doctor was thunderstruck; he stared helplessly around him. Again the terrible words were repeated!

Oello's face had undergone a ghastly change. Death now claimed her for his own. She tried to raise herself and clung to the housekeeper's hand.

"Doctor!" she said, fixing her eyes on Doctor Muir's face, which wore a frightened expression; "I did *not* murder them. My son did. He got in the bath room and strangled Mr. Church; he killed his wife. That girl in there—is not Ubaldina. She is my own daughter Sura. It was a—plot—she made it. Randolph Church had a wife and child. Murder—my son is—a murderer—"

With this word on her lips she fell back on her pillow, struggling still to speak.

The housekeeper was on her knees, praying and weeping, while the doctor stood by, speechless with horror. The dying woman's eyes were fixed and glassy; she still struggled to speak for some moments; then a convulsive shudder passed over her from head to foot; her jaw fell, and the soul of the guilty woman had gone before the Mighty Judge!

"What in the world is the meaning of this?" asked Doctor Muir, when some moments had elapsed.

"Don't ask me," sobbed Mrs. Flutter. "I'm that upset I don't know what to think. It *can't* be true; she was raving, surely."

"I can't tell; but where did the voice come from?"

"Some one hid. It was very cruel and wrong of them, though."

"Let us search. Surely no one could be guilty of such an act as to disturb a dying woman."

They looked and found nothing.

Undecided what to do, the doctor left the house, telling Mrs. Flutter he would return at daylight. The housekeeper called upon the other servants, and sent for a woman to prepare the dead Oello for that peaceful resting-place where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." Mrs. Flutter was a judicious person and wisely kept to herself the history of Oello's death-bed, mentioning neither the ghostly voice nor the last confession.

She waited to hear from the doctor before

saying one word, for in her heart she felt certain there was truth in Oello's dying words.

The false Miss Church felt quite satisfied when she heard by the maid who brought her chocolate that the old Indian woman had died at midnight.

"Poor thing!" she said, as she sipped the fragrant beverage; "I heard nothing, I slept so sound. So she has gone! Well, I guess you won't be sorry; she was rather cross, I believe," and the heiress smiled condescendingly.

"Yes, miss," replied the girl, candidly; "I never liked her."

"Well, she won't trouble you any more. Go and ask Mrs. Church, with my love, to lend me Anette this morning, and I must lose no time in getting a maid."

CHAPTER XXIX.

UNMASKED.

No words can picture the rage of Stanard when he found that Elna had escaped from his snares. He blamed Sophia Bloom, but she stoutly denied all knowledge of Elna's flight. Shag Wilson had his own views on the subject, but did not express them, and in his soul rejoiced that the gambler's grand scheme had failed.

Stanard left the house after vainly trying to extort information from all its inmates. Sophia's maid, who was in the secret, was bribed to keep it, and did so.

The gambler arrived in New York, and at once sought his intended victim in her old home. She was not there, and Christine could tell him nothing of her. He set one of his friends to watch the house, but learned nothing, as Elna was wise enough to keep away from it. For the first time in his life the villain was baffled.

He was disappointed, too, on another score: some days before the death of Ubaldina he had secretly possessed himself of all her papers. He now presented himself at the bank where her money was deposited. To his amazement he learned that there were no funds to her credit.

What had she done with her money? While in this frame of mind, uncertain how to act, he wrote a letter to his mother. He then had nothing to do but sit down and await her answer. He had asked for the latest information, and hoped, yet dreaded, to learn something of Elna.

He felt secret misgivings that she had learned something of her husband, and feared she had already taken steps to claim his fortune. While in an unsettled state of mind, he could do nothing; so remained quietly in the Grand Central Hotel.

Mabel experienced no difficulty in engaging the rooms in Mrs. Cooper's house that had formerly been occupied by the unfortunate Ubaldina. The lady was only too happy to let them—especially to such a model lodger as Mabel, who paid whatever she chose to ask in advance, gave no trouble and was quiet. She had no visitors save Borrowdale and Knowles. By the advice of the latter she had taken the name of Mrs. Stanard, and informed the landlady that she was the cousin of her late lodger.

"I expect a gentleman here from Peru," said Mabel, the day of her arrival. "When he comes show him up."

She had not long to wait. Two days after she had taken up her abode the servant, who had grown so confidential with Knowles, announced:

"Company for you, ma'm," and ushered in a stout, very dark-complexioned gentleman, who looked like a stranger in New York by the unfashionable cut of his garments.

"Excuse me; there must be some mistake," said he, in good English, though he spoke it slowly as if it was unfamiliar to his tongue. "I expected to see my niece, Mrs. Ubaldina Stanard."

"Yes, sir; sit down. I represent her. I am her cousin, Mabel Nelson."

"Represent her? Is she ill?"

He took a seat, and his brown face grew pale.

"No, sir, she is not. I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news. Your niece is dead."

"Dead? Why, I heard from her quite recently, and she complained of no illness."

He looked suspiciously at Mabel.

"No, sir, her death was very sudden, and

I am glad you have arrived; for I think the cause of her sudden death will bear investigation."

"You surely don't mean that fellow killed her?"

"I cannot tell; I shall relate to you all I know," and she narrated, as briefly as possible, the whole story, not only of Ubaldina's death, but also the mysterious death of Randolph Church and the suspicions that had arisen on the subject.

"No more than I expected," answered Mr. Cantraries. "My unfortunate girl has been murdered. Not a doubt of it."

"Well, I am glad you have arrived. You will, I trust, accompany me to Mrs. Church's residence, and denounce the impostor who is usurping her name and place."

"Certainly, at once! I shall then take all necessary steps to exhume my niece's remains, and hang that scoundrel if he has killed her."

The Creole was in her so-called aunt's chamber when visitors were announced. As the cards were presented to her she uttered a cry and turned as ghastly pale as her mother who lay in her coffin up stairs.

"What's the matter, my dear?" asked Mrs. Church, nervously.

"Nothing. Tell them I can't see them," Sura said, hastily.

The footman retired. In a moment he reappeared, and advanced toward Mrs. Church with the cards upon his salver.

"The gentlemen say that they must see you, madam. Their business is important."

Sura rose; her thin, claw-like hands clutched nervously together; her face was drawn and deathlike in expression.

"Don't see them!" she cried. "I won't see them."

"What is the matter with you?" demanded Mrs. Church, in amazement. "I must see them; it is your uncle and Mr. Knox, the United States Consul at Lima, who went there when your father died."

"I know! I won't see them!" gasped the impostor, wildly.

"I think you are mad, Uba. Why shouldn't you see them? I should think you would be glad of the opportunity, as they are both old friends."

She swept from the room as she spoke, and in another moment was greeting the gentlemen.

"Where is my niece, Miss Church?" inquired Mr. Cantraries, gravely, as he saw that Mrs. Church was alone.

"She is not well, and begs to be excused," replied the old lady. "Her nurse, the Indian woman who came from Lima with her, died last night. Uba was very much attached to her; she is feeling ill and nervous."

"She is? Allow me to ask whose portrait that is?"

He indicated an oil painting of the false heiress which hung over the mantle.

"Why," answered Mrs. Church in astonishment; "that is your niece; don't you know her?"

"No, madame, it is not my niece. It is the daughter of the Chunchos squaw, Oello. Listen, and hear a strange tale."

Mrs. Church sat down and listened with apparent calmness to Mr. Cantraries's story. She learned the mortifying fact that she had been the dupe of an impostor—an impudent usurper, the daughter of a slave! Her proud soul was humiliated in the dust. She was more moved than she had been by the death of her son, for pride was the strongest feeling she possessed, and it was her pride now that was wounded.

Mr. Knox corroborated his friend's story. Ubaldina's uncle also produced letters from his niece in which she admitted the deception that had been practiced upon her aunt, and acknowledged her own marriage with Oello's son. The evidence was overwhelming and could not be set aside.

"Well, gentlemen," said the old lady, who had borne it all with surprising calmness, "you have convinced me that I have been the dupe of an impostor. Can you now advise me what to do?"

"Turn this girl and her mother out of your house!" replied Mr. Cantraries.

"The mother is beyond my reach; as I have already told you, she is no more."

"True. But cannot the girl be punished for her duplicity?" asked Ubaldina's uncle indignantly.

"Not without giving the whole business to the public," said Mr. Knox, "which would, I am sure, be exceedingly painful to Mrs. Church."

"So the murderers are to escape?" queried Mr. Cantraries hotly.

"Hush, my dear sir! We do not yet know that they are murderers."

While the gentlemen were speaking the footman announced Mr. Stamford.

Mr. Cantraries and Mr. Knox withdrew to the other end of the room while the lawyer related what had brought him.

Mrs. Church listened to the recital in perfect silence. At length she said:

"You are sure that this lady's claim is authentic?"

"Perfectly so. I have interviewed the clergyman who performed the marriage ceremony and baptized the child. He has portraits of your son, his wife and child. Miss Nelson can confirm my story. She knew your son was married, and consulted me about the matter long ago."

"Have you her address?" asked Mrs. Church suddenly.

"Who's address?—Miss Church's?"

"No; Miss Nelson's."

"Is she not with you?"

"No; she left me on account of a little misunderstanding; nothing serious."

"Hum! That is a pity. She would recognize the lady. Mr. Church showed her the portrait."

"It appears a day of surprises," observed the old lady bitterly.

"Pleasant ones, I hope. You cannot fail to be pleased with your son's widow. She is a beautiful little lady."

"A lady I trust."

"You can rely upon it!" declared the old lawyer with a bow.

"Well, Mr. Stamford, I am rather nervous to-day, but you may bring her to-morrow."

When the old gentleman retired, the other two came forward again. Mr. Cantraries looked at his watch and said:

"I must go, but I would like first to see the woman who has been personating my niece."

"Very well; you shall."

A servant was summoned and a peremptory order sent to Miss Church to come to the reception-room at once.

Sura knew her time had come, so she coolly walked into the room and confronted the two men.

"Sural!" exclaimed Mr. Cantraries. "So you have been playing the lady!"

"Yes, and playing the lady better than your niece could," returned she impudently.

Mrs. Church stared in astonishment at her boldness, for the Peruvian was not the least abashed.

"If you had only staid away till she died, I'd have snapped my fingers at you," said Sura with her finger pointed at Mrs. Church.

The old lady rose.

"Leave my house, you worthless, wicked, treacherous creature," she said in a trembling voice.

"Hal ha! I made you turn your own niece out the other night, eh? You are an old fool! Why, I have wound you around my finger ever since I have been in New York!"

With a mocking laugh she left the room, hastily packed up all the jewelry and valuables she could lay her hands on, and was out of the house in an hour.

"What did she say about your niece?" asked Mr. Cantraries, as Mrs. Church sunk into a chair looking pale and exhausted.

"Why, she poisoned my mind against my sister's daughter, a dear good girl, who has left me," explained Mrs. Church feebly. She looked as she felt, broken-spirited and wretched.

"If you refer to Miss Nelson, she is at the door in the carriage!"

"Oh! send for her; I'm so upset."

Mabel appeared, and the two gentlemen left the ladies together.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GAME UP!

STANARD awaited an answer to his letter with wild impatience. It came in an unexpected form. He sat in his room feeling gloomy and desperate, when the hall-boy announced "a lady for you, sir."

He hastened down to the parlor, where a

lady, clad in deep mourning and closely veiled, sat waiting.

"Sura!" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, Sura! I've come in answer to your letter."

"And the news?" he asked impatiently.

"Let us go to a private room," she said, glancing at a couple who had just entered.

They were shown, by Stanard's request, to a small private parlor. He could scarcely curb his impatience till they were alone.

"Now, Sura, lose no time; tell me all," he said, taking a seat near her.

"Mother is dead, to begin with."

"Dead?" His tone expressed surprise, but no sorrow.

"Yes, dead, two days ago. She will be buried to-morrow."

"What else? For pity's sake go on."

"The game is up."

"What do you mean?"

"Church's wife and child have turned up, and Ubaldina's uncle has arrived from Lima. He called on Mrs. Church and had me turned out. I listened to hear him tell her that he believed you murdered Uba. He is going to have her body taken up, and have you hanged, if he can."

"He can't; he has no proofs," said Stanard, coolly.

"Well, he'll try. I think we had better leave New York."

"Wait a bit. Have you seen Church's wife?"

"No, not yet."

"Stay here to-night. Keep quiet, and I'll make one more move."

"So will I," thought his sister, with eyes that glittered snake-like beneath her veil.

Next morning she left the hotel alone, veiled as usual. She walked to Twelfth street, and rung Mrs. Cooper's bell.

"Is Mr. Cantraries at home?" she asked.

"Yes; who shall I say?"

"Never mind; I'll walk in."

She did so. Mr. Knowles was present, for Mr. Cantraries was determined to trace the past history of his unfortunate niece, and Mabel had introduced him to the detective.

"You need not look indignant, sir," Sura said, shutting the door in the servant-girl's face, and seating herself without waiting to be asked. "I played the role of Ubaldina Church by her request, and I think I have been hardly dealt with."

This view of the case had not occurred to Mr. Cantraries.

"Well, Sura," he said, "you had to be found out some time."

"Yes, sir; but now what am I to do?"

Mr. Cantraries felt nonplused. He had never expected to have the girl boldly present herself to him like this.

"My mother is dead," resumed the girl, quietly, for she saw her words had produced an impression, "and I know nothing of New York outside of Mrs. Church's house. I am penniless."

"What do you wish to do?" asked Knowles, for he saw that the Peruvian was no match for Sura.

"I wish to obtain a reward for proving that Randolph Church and Ubaldina Church were both murdered," she said, boldly.

Both men started, and Knowles fixed his eyes on the girl in a peculiar manner.

"Can you do this?" asked the detective.

"I can, by the confession of the man who committed the crimes."

"Have you got it?"

"No! Do you take me for a fool?"

If the detective had answered as he would have liked he would have replied:

"No, for a devil," but prudence forbade.

"If you can meet me anywhere you say, and fix a room so you can hear what is said while I talk to him, I'll do it—if you pay me!"

Mr. Cantraries hesitated. This was not work to his mind. Knowles saw his scruples and answered for him.

"We will pay you."

"How much?"

The detective glanced at his principal.

"Five thousand dollars," Mr. Cantraries answered.

"Make it ten and I'll say done."

"Very well. Can you bring the man here?"

"No; he won't come here," with a meaning glance around the room.

"Where then?"

"Let me see—do you know a small house on — street?"

"A resort of gamblers?" asked Knowles.

"Yes; my mother used to meet him there occasionally."

"I know it; a desperate place. If I go there I'll go well-armed!"

"Do so."

"When shall I be there?"

"Hire a room next to the large one on the first floor. Stay there and fix it so you can hear all that's said in the large one."

"Consider it done."

"I'll be there, with my friend, about eight o'clock. Look out for him; he is desperate!"

"Very well; and now?"

"Good-day!"

She rose and left the house, returning to the hotel.

As she passed her brother's door he came out and looked surprised to see her.

"Where have you been, Sura?"

"I thought I might find out a little about Mrs. Church—the young one."

"Yes?"

He was all eagerness.

"I'm to meet Anette to-morrow. We are great friends, you know."

"Where do you meet her?"

"At a milliner's shop. I'll meet you in the evening at Mag's."

"Why not here?"

"Because I think I'm watched. When I go out of here to-morrow, I won't come back."

She little knew it, but her words were prophetic.

The brother and sister parted without another word.

"Mag's" was the house from which Sandy Martin had seen Stanard emerge on the night of the murder. It was a resort for gamblers and thieves, and Stanard had a room in it which he used as a repository for various disguises. He went in one man and came out another. Sandy had often tracked him there and waited many hours for him to emerge, while the gambler had passed him gayly and was miles away.

Knowles found little difficulty in securing the room, and soon had a place arranged through which he could hear every word that was spoken in Stanard's room. Just as eight o'clock struck the gambler entered and lit the gas. Knowles, Mr. Cantraries and Sandy Martin were in the apartment hired by the detective.

"Curse her, why don't she come?" muttered Stanard, savagely, as he paced restlessly up and down the floor.

A knock on the door sounded while he spoke. He opened it and Sura entered.

"Well?" demanded Stanard, in undisguised impatience.

"I'm out of breath, I hurried so."

"Go on. Where is she?"

"With Mrs. Church, feasted and made much of."

"Yes?" and he punctuated his anger with an oath.

"If I thought you would be grateful I'd get her to marry you yet," said Sura, in a business-like way.

"Grateful?"

"Well, you've never done anything for me!"

"I haven't, eh?"

"Well, nothing worth the name. I'd have to steal the child to begin with."

Stanard's face grew brighter. He looked steadfastly at his sister. Sura was calm and unconcerned. Her brother had locked the door when she entered; that was all that troubled her. She glanced in the direction of the hall room. To her great relief she saw that a door opened into it. This door was half concealed by the bed, but she doubted not that Knowles had tampered with it and she was right.

"You have never run any risks for me," she resumed, after a moment's silence.

"I haven't, eh? What do you call getting away with Church?"

The three men who were listening turned their eyes on each other significantly.

"I always have had doubts about that!" returned Sura. "You know the coroner said he died of heart disease."

"The coroner is a fool; coroners mostly are fools. I wonder if they find them in bankrupt insane asylums."

"Mother said she thought Church was already dead when you forced the door."

"She did, eh?"

"Yes; if he was alive why didn't he make an alarm—call Borrowdale?"

"Borrowdale was not in the pavilion that night. I opened the door about twelve o'clock, and made my way to the bath-room. I knew the flunky was out, for I watched him go. I softly opened the door. Church was just about to step into the tub, and the gurgle of the water prevented him from hearing me coming. I threw this"—and he held up a thick gold chain looped in a ring, with an odd-looking catch—"I threw this over his head and drew it close. You see it works with a spring; when you pull on this end it gets tighter and tighter; as it tightens this spring catch holds it. I drew him down on the floor and put my knee on his chest. He struggled hard, but it was no go. As for noise, he couldn't utter a chirp. When he was dead I undid the chain, closed his eyes, and laid a handkerchief soaked in stuff over his face—the stuff undertakers use for making corpses look white. Pshaw—it was nothing."

"You are very talented," admiringly.

"Well, I ain't quite a fool. As for Uba, wasn't it for you I helped her off?"

"But she committed suicide?"

"Another mistake of another fool of a coroner. I wouldn't be afraid to kill every one in New York, for as long as you don't let them see you do it the coroners never tumble."

"But the detectives?"

"Pshaw! I snap my fingers at the whole crowd—a set of conceited asses!"

"Tell me about Uba; it is quite interesting."

"Oh! I dosed her with ether and then poured some laudanum down her throat. I'd stolen all her papers before, and I wrote a letter in her hand, saying she had committed suicide."

He told it with cold-blooded nonchalance that was simply fiendish.

Thus were the terrible secrets revealed.

The mystery of the pavilion was a mystery no more.

Stanard stood before the world a self-condemned murderer.

Mr. Cantraries had been violently agitated during the recital of the terrible scene in the bath-room, but he controlled himself. When, however, he heard the villain confess the murder of his niece, he could restrain his feelings no longer. With one bound he sprung through the door, from the hinges of which the screws had been removed, and seized Stanard by the throat.

"Murderer!" he cried, wildly, as the gambler struggled to free himself.

Knowles and Sandy Martin had followed Mr. Cantraries into the room, springing over the bed.

Stanard shook himself free of the old gentleman and gazed around him like a tiger at bay. He saw the door torn open, and the detective standing before it.

"So I am trapped!" he said, viciously.

"Yes," responded Knowles, producing a shining pair of handcuffs. "The fools of detectives have run you down."

"Thanks to you, my fair sister!"

The murderer turned upon her with a perfectly devilish smile upon his white lips.

"Traitorous fiend! I might have known you better. So you led me into this trap?"

Sura looked in his face with glittering eyes, and laughed mockingly. She did not see his left hand steal into his pocket.

"Ten thousand dollars ain't picked up every day," she suggested, with another taunting laugh.

"Oh! you sold me, did you? Well, I shall see that you are paid!" and with his last word came a quick flash, and a loud report rung out.

The Creole girl fell upon the floor, shot through the heart.

"You see, gentlemen, how I pay my debts! One more!" and before a hand could be raised to stop him, a bullet sped through his own heart and he fell beside his sister, dead ere he touched the floor.

The revolver crashed from his lifeless hand. Only two of its charges had been used; five remained.

The sound of hasty footsteps and cries of alarm warned the three men of the approach of the other inmates of the house.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Cantraries, "I depend upon both of you for the honor of the Church family to bury these secrets in your own bosoms. No good can be done by making them public, now that the murderer has gone to his account. Let the secret of the pavilion remain a secret forever."

CHAPTER XXXI.

GATHERING UP THE THREADS.

NEITHER Mrs. Church nor Elna were ever told the true story of Randolph's death. It would have been too painful for them to hear it, and the knowledge could do them no good.

The old lady was greatly changed by her afflictions, but remained proud and stately to the end. Mabel Nelson was her heiress when she passed away, some six months after her eyes were opened to Sura's real character.

She loved little Randolph dearly, but knew that his father's fortune was ample for him, so she willed all her own to her sister-in-law's child, whom she had learned to love and appreciate at her true value, when her eyes were no longer blinded by the arts of the treacherous Creole.

Stanard and his sister were quietly buried after the inquest was over. The three who had witnessed the murder and suicide related the same story—Mr. Cantraries had been swindled by Stanard, and the woman had given him up to the detectives. In revenge he shot her, and then realizing the crime he had committed, he killed himself.

This story went out to the public, and the public was satisfied.

No names were given except fictitious ones, and no one ever identified Sura's remains. So ended two ill-spent lives; the worse than worthless brother and sister were unwept and forgotten.

The secret Mr. Cantraries had to tell Ubalina had he found her alive, was that he had speculated with a great deal of her money and lost it. Enough was left, however, to amply reward the detectives.

Sandy Martin was made quite a rich man in his own estimation. He is still on the force.

Borrowdale lives with the Church family, and will one day be young Randolph's valet, but not in the pavilion; that building is leveled to the ground. Elna could not bear to see it, and had it removed.

The little woman is as happy as she can ever hope to be in the love of her son and Mabel—they are fast friends.

Elna did not forget to return Sophia Bloom's loan, and to write her a kind, grateful letter. Sophia replied politely, and the name she signed at the bottom of her letter was—Sophia Wilson. She had forgotten Stanard, and made Shag a happy man. They have abandoned their precarious mode of life, moved into a new neighborhood, and pass for respectable members of society—albeit a "little off color" in the matter of culture and refinement.

Knowles is still an active member of the force. He calls on Borrowdale occasionally and talks over the time when he was "Sarah Brown." He long ago removed the clock and phonograph which he had hidden in the wall of Oello's room. So that ghost is laid.

Mrs. Flutter still tells of its strange words, and causes a shudder to pass over her audience; a creeping feeling which she usually dispels afterward with what the English footman terms "Somethink 'ot."

Doctor Muir never alludes to Oello's strange confession upon her death-bed, but ever since that night, in the bottom of his Scotch Presbyterian heart there lingers a belief in the supernatural.

THE END.

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